

SECOND SERIES

SCANDINAVIAN PLAYS
OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

NORDAHL GRIEG

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KJELD ABELL




1944

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

PRINCETON

FOR THE AMERICAN-SCANDINAVIAN FOUNDATION

NEW YORK



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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

BY PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS AT PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

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LONDON: HUMPHREY MILFORD, OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

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The Defeat

A Play About The Paris Commune

[Nederlaget, 1936]

BY NORDAHL GRIEG

Translated from the Norwegian by J. B. C. Watkins

CHARACTERS

LOUIS, *a cabinetmaker*
MARIE, *his wife*
MERCHANT BRIGEAU
THE CAFÉ OWNER
MARTIN, *a journeyman baker*
LUCIEN
PAULINE
MICHEL, *a coachman*
MAURICE }
GUY } *children*
ROSE }
GABRIELLE LANGEVIN, *a teacher*
PIERRE
MADAME LASALLE, *mother of*
 Pierre and Pauline
LAURA, *a brothel keeper*
VARLIN }
SCHULZE } *bookbinders*
THE WAR CRIPPLE
COLONEL ROSSEL
BESLAY, *a mechanic*
THE POLICE COMMISSIONER
FIRST WOMAN
SECOND WOMAN
RIGAULT }
RENÉ SÉGUR } *medical students*
FÉLICITÉ'S MOTHER
A POLICEMAN
GUSTAVE COURBET
SUZANNE, *his model*
DELESCLUZE, *a journalist*
THIERS, *President of France*
ELISE, *his wife*

THE MINISTER
THE OFFICER
A CATHOLIC PRIEST
PELLERIN } *secret service agents*
BRUNEL }
A YOUNG GIRL
THE CAPTAIN OF THE NATIONAL GUARD
THE ARCHBISHOP
THE MARQUIS DE PLOEUC, *Governor*
 of the Bank of France
DEBRUN, *Thiers' emissary*
OFFICER ON GUARD
A GENTLEMAN
A LADY
A NATIONAL GUARDSMAN
GENERAL GALLIFFET
SYLVIE GÉRARD, *a dancer*
 at the Opera
THE LIEUTENANT
A WHITE-HAIRED MAN
LABORERS, OFFICERS,
 VERSAILLES SOLDIERS, WOMEN

ACT I

SCENE I

A street in Montmartre. An afternoon in March 1871.

Stairs lead down into the orchestra pit on both sides; this is the street continuing on downwards. On the stage at the left a little café with tables outside. At the right a pawnshop. Between the buildings the street goes on upwards in flights of stairs. At the right on this central stairway a brothel.

Merchant Brigeau, a man of about fifty, sits outside the café. In front of the pawnshop there is a long queue. Down on the stairway at the right a little group clusters around a sewer hole. Maurice, a boy of ten, is fishing with a line. Coachman Michel, sixty, looks on patiently. Two children of nine or ten, Guy and Rose, peek down occasionally, then relapse into indolence. A young boy, Pierre, lies apathetically alongside. Back in the semi-darkness can be seen dimly a little girl, Félicité, asleep. All are pale, famished, and tortured.

On the stairs at the left:

(A young workman, Louis, and Marie, his wife, walk slowly up.)

LOUIS *(stops and looks at the plane he has under his arm)*. No, I can't do it. I can't hock my plane.

MARIE. But we have nothing else left, Louis.

LOUIS. The saw and the chisels—it was bad enough to take them. But the plane—don't you realize?

MARIE. Oh, yes, I understand.

LOUIS. Wait just one day! Perhaps I'll get work tomorrow.

MARIE. You've said that every day for two months.

LOUIS. But if I let my plane go, it's the end! Nobody wants a man without tools. Then I'll never get work again. *Never!*

MARIE. But our boy must have food today. If we wait till tomorrow, it's the cemetery for him. *(Stoopingly they walk*

upwards, cross the stage, and join the queue outside the pawnshop.)

Outside the café:

MERCHANT BRIGEAU (*irritably to the Café Owner*). Don't you see her? Her name's Pauline Lasalle. Dark, thin, young. Quite young.

CAFÉ OWNER. Oh, we know her all right here in the street.

BRIGEAU. Don't you see her mother either? They were to be here at four o'clock. Got paid in advance. Oh, they'd better look out.

In the queue:

(*Martin, a journeyman baker, turns toward Marie and Louis, who are standing behind him.*)

MARTIN (*pointing off into the distance*). There are the campfires of the Germans! They're cooking, the swine. Meat and potatoes and flour, as much as they want. Yes, their old Bismarck is satisfied now. He's got us where he wanted us. (*Takes in the whole street at a glance.*) Yes, now we have peace.

LOUIS. If the boy grows up, he'll avenge us, won't he, Marie?

MARIE. Is that why you're selling the plane?

LOUIS. The boy will avenge us.

On the center stairs:

(*Lucien and Pauline, he twenty, she fifteen, come cautiously down; stop short at the sight of Brigeau.*)

PAULINE. There he is!

LOUIS. Look how he's gaping round trying to find you, the old pig.

PAULINE. Never mind about him! (*Throws her arms around Lucien's neck.*) Let's run away to the cemetery. (*Hand in hand they run up the stairway.*)

On the stairs at the right:

COACHMAN MICHEL. Was that a bite?

MAURICE (*pulling up the line*). Don't think so. It must be fished out here.

MICHEL. Try a little longer!

MAURICE (*examining the hook*). Well, I'll be damned! If they haven't gone and taken the bait.

MICHEL (*delighted*). There, you see! Here's some new bait for you, a real tasty bit. He can be as sly as he likes, but he won't be able to resist this one, that old devil down there.

GABRIELLE LANGEVIN (*a young teacher, comes walking up the stairs at the right, stops, and bends over Maurice, who is just lowering his hook*). Are you fishing? What ever are you fishing for?

MAURICE. Rats, of course.

GABRIELLE. With a hook! Don't you realize that they must suffer terribly?

PIERRE (*raises himself up on one arm and says cuttingly*). Aw, shut your trap!

MAURICE (*fishing*). Don't talk to her like that. She's awfully queer; but nice.

PIERRE. Do you think we're not suffering, too—just as much as the rat does when its jaw bleeds?

GABRIELLE. I know. (*Sits down with them on the steps.*)

GUY. Maurice—if you catch a rat, you'll let me have it, won't you?

MAURICE. No.

GUY. Will you eat it yourself?

MAURICE. Surely you don't think I can afford to do that, do you? I'll sell it. Three francs.

GUY. But you've sold one already today.

MAURICE. I'm saving up.

Outside the café:

BRIGEAU (*to the proprietor, with a nod toward Maurice*). That boy is going to amount to something. He's saving up, he says. Rat by rat. Starting out with two empty hands. Do you see anything of her? Oh, the little minx!

On the stairs:

MICHEL (*to Gabrielle*). Yes, he's a fine boy, he is indeed.

Don't know what I'd have done without him, since I lost Marthe.

GABRIELLE. Was Marthe your wife?

MICHEL. No such luck.

MAURICE. It was his horse.

MICHEL. Had to slaughter her. Couldn't get feed. In the end she was nothing but skin and bone. Big open sores. The last week she fell down in the street every day. But now Maurice says we must save up for a horse.

GABRIELLE. Are you related, you two?

MICHEL (*shaking his head*). He had no place to go after his father fell fighting the Germans. So he lay in the stable with Marthe; in the daytime he rode round on the box with me.

GABRIELLE. And now you never come to me any more to read and write? And you were so clever, too! Come any time you like. Perhaps I can teach you something worth learning, you see, so that some day you will be a strong, free man.

MAURICE. I haven't time. I'm saving up for a horse.

GABRIELLE (*to Guy and Rose*). But you children! I'd like so much to help and I don't suppose you're saving up for a horse! What are you doing?

GUY. We're unemployed.

ROSE. We've been fired from the spinning mill.

GABRIELLE. But wouldn't it be better to come to me than stay out in the street?

GUY. It's better to lie here. Then we don't notice it so much.

GABRIELLE. That you've nothing to eat? (*Guy nods.*) Oh, children—that I have nothing to give you! Is that little girl over there asleep?

MAURICE. Yes. She's been lying there ever since we came.

GABRIELLE. How thin and small she is! (*Starts to get up, but sits down again.*) No, I'll not waken you. (*Madame Lasalle, tipsy and humming, comes up the steps at the right. Guy and Rose rush down to her.*)

GUY. Give us a drink, too, can't you? Hand over the bottle!

ROSE. Come on, be a sport. Let the rest of us have a nip, too, damn it all.

PIERRE. Leave her alone.

MME. LASALLE. That's right! That's a good son to stand up for his mother.

PIERRE. Shut up.

MME. LASALLE. What kind of a face is that you're putting on, son? Do you begrudge your mother a little happiness? Perhaps you think she has too easy a time, is that it?

PIERRE. Get home with you.

MME. LASALLE. Oh, yes, hardhearted you've always been.

BRIGEAU (*has now dashed over to Madame Lasalle*). Where's she gone? I've been sitting here waiting for hours. And you're drunk, too! After promising to stay sober and keep an eye on her. Stinking drunk, an unnatural mother you are.

MME. LASALLE. Don't you think a mother has a right to get drunk the night her daughter is to start in a whore-house?

BRIGEAU. But I'm to have her first. I've paid you twenty francs to be the first. You were going to keep an eye on her, you said, and now she's running round with a fellow who'll stop at nothing, a regular young swine. Find her for me, perhaps she's out cheating me.

MME. LASALLE. She won't do anything her mother wouldn't want her to do.

BRIGEAU. Oh, yes, everybody cheats me. Do people pay their rent, I ask you? The government let them off for the duration. But now there is peace, let them pay! The desire to cheat has got into people's blood, they laugh at law and order. Come across with Pauline!

MME. LASALLE (*on her way into the café*). Just be patient! Everything will be all right.

BRIGEAU. If you don't make everything all right, you'll lose your job. I can't use a drunken swine to scour my steps. (*Sits down at the table in a rage.*)

On the stairs:

GABRIELLE. Was it your sister they were talking about? Listen here: you must not let this happen!

PIERRE. Shut up, I tell you. What could you give to the kids? Could you give them bread? No, all you could give them was sympathy. A fig for your sympathy! And what can I give my sister? Exactly the same. But I don't pester her with it.

In the queue:

LOUIS (*to Martin*). What are you trying to hock?

MARTIN. My wedding ring.

LOUIS. Well, I'm hocking my plane. You're welcome to look at it. Not bad, is it? Maple. We've had many good times together. I remember the last day at the shop. (*Turning to Marie*) You and the boy came down with the lunch pail, it was such a fine day. I was busy jointing a table top; thin shavings a yard long whistled up from the plane and curled around my hand. (*Looks at the plane, and then, almost hopefully, at Marie; bows his head.*)

In front of the café:

CAFÉ OWNER (*driving Mme. Lasalle out*). No, you can't get anything here. And we're not going to have any begging in this place.

BRIGEAU (*hisses after her*). Fetch me the girl.

Up on the center stairs:

(*In front of the brothel stands Laura, the madam.*)

LAURA (*to Mme. Lasalle*). What did the squire want? Is it Pauline he's after?

MME. LASALLE. He married an elderly widow, poor chap, so now it's simply got to be something young.

LAURA. Just let him come! But now I must speak to you seriously, Mme. Lasalle! What's this about Pauline and that boy she's running round with? I want a good, steady girl who'll tend to her work and not be thinking about other things. The customers are particular, you know. She'll have to understand that I'm doing an act of charity when I take her in, what with

money so scarce and people so short of energy as they are these days. And remember: this is a well-regulated household. She'll have to be here promptly at seven o'clock this evening.

MME. LASALLE. She'll be there on the dot. But I would like to have a little money in advance. I want to buy a frame for her father's picture so she can have it on the wall . . .

LAURA. It looks to me as if you'd had enough. (*She goes into the house. Mme. Lasalle staggers on up the stairs.*)

The stairs at the left:

(*The two bookbinders, Varlin and his German fellow worker Schulze, are coming up.*)

SCHULZE (*stops and looks over at the children*). Ach mein Gott! Die armen Kinder. Ach mein Gott! (*They sit down at a table and order two portions of soup.*)

In the queue:

MARTIN. It's two Germans! They're talking German. They're Germans!

At the table:

BRIGEAU. Cursed rabble. Two Germans. Very worst kind.

On the center stairs:

(*A war cripple, with no legs, rides down with the help of two steel brushes in his hands.*)

WAR CRIPPLE. Throw the Germans into the Seine!

SHOUT FROM THE CROWD. Throw them into the river!

VARLIN (*about thirty, with a mild, thoughtful expression but at the same time with a passionate intensity about him, has got up*). Some of you know me. I'm Varlin, the bookbinder.

In the queue:

LOUIS. Yes, I know him.

On the stairs at the right:

GABRIELLE. He's a good man.

MARTIN. But that other fellow is a German.

VARLIN. Yes, but he is a friend. He works beside me in the shop.

LOUIS. Our own people are out of work.

VARLIN. He *knows* more than we do. We've got to learn.

WAR CRIPPLE. No German is a friend. We've got to hate them.

VARLIN. I don't hate them.

WAR CRIPPLE. Will you listen to that! He's been bribed. He's taken German gold.

VARLIN. The German soldiers, who are they after all? They are people like us. They have killed and tortured and hated us as we have hated them, but we have both been led astray. I have read of friends who did not recognize each other in the dark being egged on to fight to the death by powers that wished them ill. That's how the soldiers have fought on both sides—friends in the dark.

WAR CRIPPLE (*shrieks*). We have no use for your International! We have our Fatherland. It's for that I have given life and limb, and others must do the same. *All others!* Do you want us to have suffered in vain?

VARLIN. Yes, my friend, would that you had! It were best if you were forgotten. For you are honor, suffering, and the next war.

BRIGEAU. Go back to your friends!

WAR CRIPPLE. To Berlin with him!

MANY. To Berlin!

VARLIN. Why do you shout like that? Is it so as not to think? But if we think, we can save ourselves. I am one of you, don't waste time on me. For now the enemy is coming.

MARIE (*fearfully*). Are they coming? But there's peace now, isn't there?

VARLIN. When our armies collapsed and the Empire fell, we swore to defend the city to the last man. We—you and I—the people of Paris. But the generals did not use us, they let the Germans shut us in and slowly they let a city of idle men starve to death.

MANY. That's true. (*The Police Commissioner enters from the right and is now standing on the children's step.*)

VARLIN. Why? Because if the people had won, the people would have been a threat against the generals and those in power. Then we should have known the strength, the dangerous strength, that is in us. That's why we could not be allowed to win, why we had to be weakened, made desperate and incapable of resistance. Now we have reached the bottom, now we have lost the war, and now our country intends to conquer us.

WAR CRIPPLE. He lies.

On the center stairs:

COLONEL ROSSEL (*has come down during Varlin's speech*). No. There is no infamy we cannot credit to the generals. I have taken part in the war, I know the incompetence, cowardice, and arrogance with which they have betrayed us. I was once proud of being an officer in the French army. Now I'm ashamed of it. (*He sits down at a table.*)

LOUIS. What's going to happen now, Varlin?

VARLIN. Yesterday the President of the Republic came back to Paris. It is said that M. Thiers is to restore normal conditions. That means that money will be called in. All house rents, all debts which have been deferred during the siege, will have to be paid within two weeks.

BRIGEAU (*pleased, but cautiously to himself*). That's right. We must have law and order!

MARIE. No, we can't do any more.

LOUIS. Better to fight.

MARTIN. Better to die.

VARLIN. We must band together. We must be so many that they can't break us down.

BESLAY (*an old mechanic, honesty and dignity personified, comes up the stairs at the left*). We must make them respect us. That's the first thing. Isn't that so, Citizen Varlin?

VARLIN. That is true.

BESLAY. Society is like a fine mechanism: it takes knowledge to regulate it. Those who are in power today will not give us that knowledge. They want to keep us down. Very well, then

we shall acquire it ourselves. We shall show them that our will is stronger than theirs, and when we are their equals, can they refuse to share? It is often asked: when will the day dawn for the proletariat? I'll tell you. Every night the workers sit around the lamp and study and discuss, the dawn is on its way.

MARTIN. That sounds fine, but when am *I* to sit with my comrades? As soon as I have hocked my ring, I must stand in the bakery until early tomorrow morning. Every evening, year out and year in, I have to turn into that red-hot hole, never a night free.

BRIGEAU. You'd rather be kneading your old woman, I imagine.

MARTIN. Oh, shut your face! I'd like to read, I would.

On the stairs at the right:

GUY. Must be wonderful to be a baker. Sniff the smell of bread.

POLICE COMMISSIONER (*crosses the stage, stops in front of Varlin, and says in an undertone*). You've been in prison before for your criminal talk, my good Varlin. You'd better look out.

VARLIN. Is it a crime to see and recognize?

POLICE COMMISSIONER. You, too, Beslay, I'm warning you.

BRIGEAU. Just what they deserve!

POLICE COMMISSIONER (*to Rossel*). May I ask your name?

ROSSEL. Colonel Rossel.

POLICE COMMISSIONER. You'll probably be hearing from me. (*Walks back again and out at the right.*)

WAR CRIPPLE (*rides out the same way*). To Berlin with them!

On the stairs at the right:

GABRIELLE LANGEVIN (*bending anxiously over the child beside the wall*). Wake up! Why, she's cold. Wake up, wake up! No. She's dead. Wake up! Run for a doctor. Oh, please do try to waken up, child!

In the queue:

MARIE. Who's dead?

MARTIN. It must be one of the kids.

WOMAN (*behind Marie*). Keep to your place!

MARIE. But a child has died.

WOMAN. If you leave the queue, you'll lose your place. (*Varlin, Beslay, and Schulze have hurried down to Gabrielle.*)

GABRIELLE. Is she breathing? Oh the poor little thing, so thin and worn out. Look at that line around her mouth. I just can't go on living, Varlin.

VARLIN. We still have a long time ahead of us.

GUY. He's got a bite!

ROSE. There's a rat on the hook!

MICHEL. Careful now, Maurice.

ROSE AND GUY. Hurrah!

MICHEL (*throttling the rat*). It couldn't resist.

In the queue:

SECOND WOMAN (*has joined the queue*). What's the matter?

MARIE. A child has died.

FIRST WOMAN. They've caught a rat.

On the stairs:

GABRIELLE (*shouts*). Isn't there a doctor coming? A little child has died.

ROSE. What do you want of a doctor then?

MICHEL. The tenth this week! We'll be sitting on the box again yet, Maurice.

In the queue:

MARIE. Now it's your turn, Louis. We must go in now. (*Louis looks at her.*)

MARIE. Our boy is dying! (*Both cross the threshold. Rigault and René Ségur come up the stairs at the right. They are both medical students. Rigault has a clever, hard, bitter face. René is pale, burning with hunger for life and a feeling of inferiority.*)

RIGAULT. Let me look at her. She has been dead for several hours. Undernourishment. Naturally! (*To Guy*) Do you know her mother? Fetch her.

(*Guy makes no move to go.*)

(*Takes out some change.*) Run now, damn you! (*Guy goes.*)

CAFÉ OWNER (*has come over to Maurice and bids on the rat*). Two francs.

MAURICE. Three.

CAFÉ OWNER. Two francs fifty.

MAURICE. Three. I must stick to my price.

CAFÉ OWNER. Here's your money, you little bloodsucker.

VARLIN (*to Gabrielle*). Are you coming to the meeting this evening?

GABRIELLE. Is anything any use, Varlin? (*She sits down beside the child. Beslay and Schulze go back to the table.*)

BESLAY (*shaking his head*). No, no.

VARLIN (*has remained behind with Rigault and René*). Citizen Rigault, you who are fighting for progress—you would make us very happy if you would come to one of our meetings.

RIGAULT (*walks over toward the café with Varlin and René*). I am not a worker and you bore me. You chatter away about enlightenment and all sorts of improvements. That's not what matters.

VARLIN. What does matter then?

RIGAULT. Annihilation. Destruction.

VARLIN. Can a man live for that?

RIGAULT. Who says a man shall have anything to live for? (*He turns quickly to René. Varlin goes to his table.*) Have you the posters? We must wait a bit to paste them up. Do you see that man over there? And the one in the queue there? Both are detectives. Oh, they'll be zealous now that Thiers has come back! But perhaps we're a little too sly for them. I could very well imagine that they won't get hold of a single one of our placard posters. Very well.

In the queue:

(*More people have joined it.*)

FIRST WOMAN. It's one of Mme. Rivot's kids that's lying dead down there.

SECOND WOMAN. It's her mother who has killed her. She

has four children, but she threw two of them out into the street.

FIRST WOMAN. What a monster! She'll probably be along soon now herself, though God knows.

SECOND WOMAN. Yes, she wouldn't give her anything to eat. They hadn't much, but that poor little thing got nothing.

In front of the café:

RENÉ (*looking over at the children*). Here it's the real thing. For the rich the scarcity of food is just a new refinement. It has become so amusing at the restaurants since the wild animals from the Zoological Garden have been slaughtered and appear on the menu. Standing outside the café yesterday, I heard an officer say to Sylvie Gérard, as he helped her out of the carriage: "Today you'll have a course that you ought to eat every day: tiger's heart," he said. Oh, some day we'll roast his heart.

RIGAULT. But Sylvie Gérard's heart—what shall we do with it?

RENÉ. She's an artist, Rigault! She's unique. Every evening that she dances at the opera I go. I can do without food, but I have to see her. I can freeze, but I must have beauty. The other day I was completely broke. I begged and threatened the ushers to get in. No. They threw me down the steps. Then I knew what it was to be *on the outside*; in the empty street I was suddenly together with all the millions who never have bread, kindness, beauty, and something within me seemed to shriek: Hate, steal, murder, but get inside.

RIGAULT. Hate is an attribute I don't rely on. I shall never hate.

RENÉ. What will you do?

RIGAULT. I shall kill. There will be use for me. A revolution demands that a number of people be rooted out, systematically and purposefully. The man who understood that best in the Great Revolution was Marat. He is my teacher. Perhaps it is significant that I, like him, am a medical student. I am not restrained by any mystical conception of human life. How cowardly it is, this horror of Marat! He dared to admit the truth,

"Make me dictator so that I can *kill*," he declared, "but with a cannon ball bound to my foot so that the people can always get hold of me." I shall continue where Marat left off. (*Félicité's mother comes down the stairs, followed by Guy.*)

RENÉ. There's the mother.

RIGAULT. That's excellent. We can make use of this. Now we can put up our posters. (*During the following scene they succeed in putting up the posters on the wall of the pawnshop at the left of the door, completely hidden by the crowd who are all looking at the mother.*)

FIRST WOMAN. She's lying down there. Well, now you've got what you wanted.

THE MOTHER. Yes, now I've got what I wanted.

WOMAN. There ought to be a punishment for a mother who would drive out her innocent child to die.

MOTHER. No, I didn't drive her out. (*Kneels down beside the child.*) Oh, my darling, now you shall come home with me and we shall talk together.

WOMAN. But you didn't give her any food.

MOTHER. I had none. I tried to keep them all alive, but I had no food. I let them drink from my breast, but there was no milk. I prayed God to let them eat from my body—let it be as Thy body! Then I realized that perhaps two of them could live, the two strongest, if they got all the food we had. And I said to the two others: You can't have any food, I said, in the name of Almighty God believe that it is for the sake of love that I do this. Marcelle died quickly, but for Félicité it took a long time. Every moment I have, I said to her, I'll lie beside you, and you shall be in my arms, for I love you most of all. And she understood, she was so patient, but yesterday she had crept down the stairs, she thought perhaps someone outside could give her food. I went and looked for her, but I didn't find her. You shouldn't have lain here alone; you should have been with mother, my little pet. (*She tries to lift the child up but is not able. Pierre takes the little girl and, followed by the*

mother and Gabrielle, walks up the stairs. Now the people step aside, and for the first time the red posters are visible on the wall. Rigault and René have long since resumed their places at the table.)

BRIGEAU (*catches sight of the posters, almost shrieks with fear*). Look at the posters!

BESLAY. What do they say, Varlin?

VARLIN (*reading*). "Citizens! Hangman Thiers plans to occupy the workers' quarters and disarm our last defense, the National Guard. Remember what our forefathers did in the Great Revolution. They created the Commune, a red Paris, that struck down all reaction. Follow their example. Be cautious—but when the time is ripe, then strike!" (*It is now beginning to get dark.*)

MARTIN (*has come out of the pawnshop*). Good! Long live the Commune!

MANY IN THE QUEUE. Long live the Commune!

THE POLICE COMMISSIONER (*has entered from the right, walks over to the poster. There is silence*). There are a couple of words here that I should like to impress on your minds: *Be cautious*. Any expression of opinion may be followed by the direst consequences. You, M. Rigault, who have made the police force your particular study, will be able to testify that the police cannot be said to have been absent here today. (*Tears down the poster.*)

RIGAUULT. Mr. Police Commissioner, there were also some other words on the poster so far as I could see: *When the time is ripe*, it said. (*The painter Gustave Courbet, stout, hearty, vital, enormously self-centered, hurries up the stairs at the left, followed by his model and mistress Suzanne.*)

COURBET. What's going on here? Down with Thiers! Long live the Commune!

RIGAUULT. Master Courbet, I would ask you for your own sake to be cautious. The police are here. We may expect the government to act.

COURBET. I thank you. But when I have a conviction, I don't whisper. I roar! You mentioned the government. Need I remind you of what I replied to Napoleon III's government when they expressed their disapproval of my art? "My regards to the authorities," I said, "and tell them that I am a government in myself." Down with authority!

RENÉ AND SEVERAL OTHERS. Bravo!

A POLICEMAN (*to the Police Commissioner*). Shall I arrest him?

POLICE COMMISSIONER. We must be as passive as possible until help comes. Besides, he's an artist. (*The Café Owner has now lit the gas jet inside the café. The light falls on the tables, strongest on Courbet. Louis and Marie have come out of the shop.*)

LOUIS. That was madness.

MARIE. It had to be. (*Louis sits down, as though paralyzed, on the center stairs. Marie goes out to the left.*)

COURBET (*who is now sitting with Suzanne at a table, shouts out*). They have persecuted me, scorned and suppressed me, and do you know why? Because I paint only *what I see*. Nobody else does it, because it's dangerous. It *is* dangerous. To *see*, not to close your eyes—that, in our time, is to accuse, to threaten! I have painted the poor stonebreakers at home in Ornans, bent over their miserably paid work, so that it became a cry for justice. I have painted the lecherous and drunken priests who suck the blood out of the people; and the vulgar, lazy females of the *bourgeoisie*, swollen with fat and luxury. Beer! (*Pierre and Gabrielle now walk down the stairs and sit down again with the children.*) But I have also painted health and happiness; for the world is such that seeing is believing. Yes, thank God for my eyes and thank God for what I have seen! Good solid lassies with breasts and thighs and legs exactly as they should be—I have painted the joy of it, so that the hypocrites writhed in terror because it was not sin and shame, it was just so damnable good. And here into this city I have hurled woods and

rivers and mountains, the mighty breath of earth that crushes their miserable little world of greed and stock exchange and money. Now I have come from the sea, and these bourgeois knaves won't get away from that scot-free. The sea—it is akin to me; it is never small. Shall I tell you what the sea is? The sea, confound my soul, is revolution!

VARLIN. We are proud, Master Courbet, that such a great artist as you should stand on the side of the people.

COURBET. I do indeed. Through thick and thin! For me the artist and the man are one; so it must be, for a man who calls himself a realist. I would like my eyes to free mankind, but if that is not enough, well and good! Here is the rest of the man, too! My opinions lead, if necessary, right to the barricade.

SEVERAL. Long live Courbet!

On the stairs at the right:

PIERRE (*shouts*). You're too damn fat to stand on the barricade.

On the main stairs:

LAURA. If I had you for five minutes, you'd be as thin as a fiddle.

COURBET (*aggrieved*). Perhaps my breadth has been an advantage when it came to bearing persecution and loneliness. Perhaps I have been helping to carry burdens not for myself alone but for the whole century. (*In a low tone*) Suzanne, have I got stouter?

SUZANNE. Good heavens, no!

COURBET (*still brooding, to Suzanne*). It wasn't what he said. It was the tone of his voice that hurt me. Aren't the common people going to understand me either?

SUZANNE. Gustave, you must promise me one thing: that you won't get thinner. That would be like stealing something from the charms that belong to me.

COURBET (*delighted*). Oh, my sweet Suzanne, I don't lack confidence in myself. But perhaps I shall arrive victorious with my message like the soldier from Marathon—*dead*.

SUZANNE. Don't talk like that! You know everybody loves you.

COURBET (*ruffling his feathers again*). In spite of everything, in spite of everything! I shall not disappoint their love. How beautiful you are this evening, Suzanne! Turn your face a little. There. It struck me the first time I saw you; there is something about your profile that reminds me of myself. My own! (*Strikes the table, in a roar, half to Rigault.*) Nothing can stop the man who fights against injustice. (*A lamplighter now lights the gas jet over the stairs at the right.*)

On the stairs:

PIERRE (*shrieks to Courbet*). Keep quiet, damn you, keep quiet!

In front of the café:

RIGAUULT (*to Courbet*). No, of course not. That's splendid. But there's something brewing here that I don't like . . .

On the stairs:

PIERRE. Injustice—they use it as if it were such a fine juicy word. But injustice is hunger and lice and drunkenness, that's what it is.

GABRIELLE. And therefore we must fight against it.

PIERRE. We who are poor live like pigs. And those who have money also live like pigs. It all comes to the same thing.

GABRIELLE. Don't you believe there is such a thing as progress in the world?

PIERRE. Oh, sure. Just look at those two over there. (*Points over toward Courbet and Rigault.*) They sit in the café there every day and talk about injustice. If they got into power, they would sit at a more elegant café. I damn well do believe in progress.

GABRIELLE. I wish you could meet my brother some day. He's a doctor. He could tell you what science, for instance, is achieving in recent years. It's magnificent. But he's not here now.

PIERRE. Where is he then?

GABRIELLE. He was in the war and now he's a prisoner in Germany.

PIERRE (*with a scornful laugh*). Well, we'll have to wait a long time then before he can tell us anything. (*Marie enters from the left. Louis gets up from the center stairs and hurries breathlessly toward her.*)

LOUIS. Give me the money back! I want to go in and redeem my plane. It's as though my arms were cut off, Marie. And I'll get work tomorrow. I'm sure of it.

MARIE. I haven't got the money. I bought bread for the boy.

LOUIS. We'll take the bread back.

MARIE. No.

In front of the café:

BESLAY (*to Courbet*). No, I don't look at the war that way, Master Courbet. I say with our great Victor Hugo: "The Germans won the victory, the French the honor."

COURBET (*turns to Suzanne, in a low tone*). The great Victor Hugo! The great . . . Will they never stop persecuting me?

In the center of the stage:

LOUIS. Now we'll die. When this is eaten up, we'll all die together. Have you any money left?

MARIE. Four francs.

LOUIS. Let's have it.

MARIE. No.

LOUIS. But, damn it, I say yes. Now we'll die. Now I'm going to drink.

MARIE (*forcing his face toward hers*). Look at me. It's you and I, isn't it, Louis? (*The bitterness and hatred go out of the man's face.*) Let's go home to the boy now. (*They go down the stairs at the left. During this scene Laura has lit the red lamp over the brothel door and gone inside again.*)

On the center stairs:

(*Lucien and Pauline come down the stairs and remain standing in the red glow of the lamp.*)

LUCIEN. Darling, how good you are, Pauline.

PAULINE (*coming close to him*). Lucien, I love you. I want to stay with you. I don't want to go in there. What if mother does go to jail because she has taken money in advance? What the devil do I care? I love you. Now spring is coming and the weather will get warm and we can sleep outside. And then we'll steal together. Oh, Lucien, won't it be fun to steal together!

BRIGEAU (*jumps up and overtakes them as they are going down the stairs at the right*). What kind of manners is this?—to keep people waiting hour after hour! But you are pretty, pretty and thin and young. (*Suddenly suspicious, grasps her by the wrist.*) Where have you been?

PAULINE. In the cemetery, of course.

BRIGEAU. Have you cheated me? Oh, the swine, they've cheated me.

PAULINE. I suppose you thought I was going round saving up for you? (*Proudly*) Oh no, then you don't know the boys in the street.

BRIGEAU. Oh, is that so? Well then, I'll see to it that your mother spends the rest of her life where she belongs: in the gutter. I'll have her kicked out of her room, and that in a hurry, too. Police!

A POLICEMAN. We have something else to think about.

THE POLICE COMMISSIONER (*with a poster in his hand has run up on to the center stairs with a soldier on either side. He speaks with a new voice, brutal and ruthless*). A little while ago you were so enterprising as to put up a poster. I also have a poster, this time from the government, with which it gives me peculiar pleasure to make you acquainted. (*Reads*) "My countrymen! To ensure perfect order the government has today permitted the military to occupy certain restless districts of Paris and disarm the population. Law and order must be safeguarded. Property rights will be protected, without mercy. Paris, March 18, 1871. Thiers."

BRIGEAU. Long live Thiers!

RIGAULT (*jumping up*). No! Now the moment has come!

BESLAY. The soldiers! (*Up both stairways come soldiers with bayonets on their rifles.*)

POLICE COMMISSIONER. Arrest these men! (*The soldiers advance and take their places beside the prisoners as the Police Commissioner points them out.*)

COLONEL ROSSEL. Very well.

RIGAULT. They have won the first round.

BESLAY. This is an outrageous piece of highhandedness!

POLICE COMMISSIONER (*pointing to Courbet*). Yes. Him, too.

COURBET (*suddenly with burning indignation*). Accursed hangmen who think they can coerce a free soul! But you will never succeed. *Never!*

POLICE COMMISSIONER (*goes down to Varlin*). And this fellow here. Now I guess we'll put a crimp in those revolutionary opinions of yours.

VARLIN. When there's justice and freedom on earth, I shall no longer be a revolutionary.

POLICE COMMISSIONER. Keep your filthy trap shut.

BESLAY. How is this going to end, Varlin? What does it mean?

VARLIN. It means that progress has been set back a few years. It will take a little longer.

POLICE COMMISSIONER. Take them away!

MARTIN. Now they will crush us.

THE CROWD. We are betrayed! We are lost!

DELESCLUZE (*sixty, white-haired, sallow from tropical fever, suddenly stands up on the center stairs*). Not yet!

THE CROWD. Delescluze!

DELESCLUZE (*speaking in his hoarse, passionate, arresting voice*). Thiers has been too sure of victory. He says he has the situation in hand. But the situation is you, us. (*Slowly*) There is one thing that is a thousand times worse than defeat, and that is doing nothing.

POLICE COMMISSIONER. Seize him!

DELESCLUZE (*quickly drawing a revolver*). One moment! I'm not a good speaker, my lungs are bad, I've just got out of one of M. Thiers' prisons. But let this prison voice remind you of something: that is how *freedom* will be choked, if you are beaten now. (*In a shriek*) *To arms!*

THE CROWD. To arms!

VARLIN. Soldiers, will you fire on us?

MANY OF THE SOLDIERS. No! (*Varlin puts his arms around the soldiers who are guarding him; workers and soldiers fraternize with each other. Lucien, Pierre, Maurice, and several others attack the police. The music starts. A stormy wave of people surges up the stairs.*)

BESLAY. Isn't this indiscreet?

VARLIN. It had to be so.

GABRIELLE. It is right.

COLONEL ROSSEL. Yes! I am with you! For the people—against the traitors.

RIGAULT. Long live the Commune!

COURBET. For the Commune—to the death!

SCHULZE. Es lebe die Kommune!

THE CROWD. Long live the Commune! (*Armed workers storm out of the houses.*)

LOUIS (*dashes up the stairs at the right*). To arms! I want my plane back.

SCENE 2

Thiers' library. Strong evening sun. The room is filled with copies and casts of well known Renaissance works. A large globe. On the table a great many maps.

Thiers is conversing with one of his ministers. Thiers is a tense, red-faced man with an unruly shock of white hair. He has incredible vitality for his seventy-two years. His confidence in himself is boundless. The Minister listens to him in humble admiration.

THIERS. Nothing is done unless I do it myself. I have chased through Europe from London to St. Petersburg to procure France an honorable peace. I have sat at the conference table in Versailles and driven Herr von Bismarck back from his inhuman demands; I have made the National Assembly in Bordeaux a tool for my will. Today I found Paris on the verge of rebellion; who had to strike the blow? I tell you the military governor of Paris has no more understanding of his job than I have of—(*Gropes for words, breaks off with a gesture.*)

THE MINISTER. If you had not interrupted yourself, I should have had to do so. It would be difficult to find a field in which you are not at home.

THIERS. There may be a grain of truth in what you've just said, my dear colleague. I repeat: this showdown between us and the have-nots is something I have long foreseen. On one of my journeys I saw in Holland what is happening in France to-day. Insects are boring into the foundations of society; poisoned thoughts are eating into the most universally accepted truths. If the watchmen are not on guard, the whole ocean may pour in. Who dares dispute an axiom in geometry—that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points? But an equally exalted principle—that a man has a right to possess—is shamelessly contested. But these people have found their master. If necessary I shall prove to them today that a bullet may be the shortest distance between two points: from the hand of justice to the heart of lawlessness. (*Opens his watch.*) Within twenty minutes I expect a courier with the final announcement of victory.

THE MINISTER. Yesterday fear and anxiety. Today salvation. Can we really believe it?

THIERS. I have myself laid the plan for the advance of the troops against the disturbed areas. My plans do not usually go amiss.

THE MINISTER. It is like a happy omen that the camp bed

on which I know you are in the habit of sleeping once belonged to the great Napoleon.

THIERS. Would that our generals had sometimes slept on it! I may say that I have studied strategy with some degree of thoroughness. Perhaps that was my real calling. But everything I have and know is being called upon these days. It is as though France's boundless misfortune were to be a touchstone of my youthful strength. What man of thirty could take upon his shoulders the burdens I am bearing? And now good-bye, my dear colleague. I shall expect you and the other ministers here in two hours. Wherever they may be in Paris, they will be able to drive here through a city in which perfect order prevails.

(The Minister goes.)

(Hums as he studies the maps on the table.) Fifteen thousand men against Montmartre. Ten thousand against Montrouge. Ten thousand against Belleville. The plan is sound. *(Madame Elise Thiers enters. She is much younger than her husband, beautiful, bitter, and discontented.)* Young and charming as always! Here, let me show you the movement of the troops on the map.

MME. THIERS. May I be excused? *(She walks toward the window, clasps her hands over her eyes, blinded by the light.)*

THIERS *(studies the maps)*. Are you uneasy? Quite unnecessary. I hold the situation in the hollow of my hand.

MME. THIERS. Could you imagine something quite improbable—that there should be *any* uneasiness which you don't hold in the hollow of your hand? *(Draws a curtain across the window.)*

THIERS. Rue Cassagnac. Rue Boielieu.—Well, I am waiting to hear.

MME. THIERS. It's nothing. It's the spring. I have a headache. I don't like to be disturbed by sunshine, buds, and flowers. Winter is better. It suits my way of living.

THIERS *(who gradually talks himself into a fever, carried away by his own eloquence)*. What a clever thought you've ex-

pressed there! Winter is my time of life, too; it is not oppressive, but clear and bracing. It has often struck me that winter presents people's merits in the most just relief. Cold, snow, and rain draw up the sharp dividing lines that a society must have in order to survive. The bottom layer is then driven back to the garret and the cellar, the diligent and saving get a share in the comforts of existence, but those who have distinguished themselves by birth, fortune, and genius conquer the light itself. Brilliant drawing rooms, hundreds of candelabra, fire from white fireplaces! A soirée in winter with colors and light—what is it but *bought summer*? That, my dear Elise, is the only respectable summer.

On the other hand, the summer season itself supplies a false and harmful measuring rod for existence. (*Resentfully*) It is always with disgust that I see people swarm out into the street, even in the poorest quarters. They *own* the sun! It is just one big gratuity. And what is the result, when you consider it seriously? A weakening of respect for property. It gets into their blood that they ought to possess without paying. Besides, all evil passions spawn forth in the sunshine: licentiousness and lewdness. The sacred institution of the family is mocked. All attacks on the existing order come, as we know by experience, with the spring. (*Triumphantly strikes the map.*) Place de Montmartre! This very moment my soldiers have occupied the most depraved districts.

MME. THIERS. It has often struck me that your hatred of the lower classes is your form of passion.

THIERS. I come from the people myself. I was born in chaos, during the Great Revolution, and out of wedlock besides. I have fought my way up from the mire, I have rid myself of relations who wanted to hold me down, I have conquered poverty and loneliness. I have succeeded. I know what chaotic life means; therefore I love order. I know what destitution is; therefore I have the right to possess. I know humiliation; therefore I have desired power. The road I have traveled has been inhumanly hard; it has taken iron industry and iron will. Not

one in millions has the strength to go my road; I do not wish to shorten it for others. The distance between the masses and myself—that is my greatness, that is my eternal monument. I demand respect for my life's work. For seventy-two years I have built it up, stone by stone.

MME. THIERS. My mother once said that she had brought me up exclusively with you in mind. She loved you like a son, *at least*; she wished to make sure of a good match for you. My life—has it been anything else but a stone in your building?

THIERS. Remember two things: I have never asked you for confidences regarding your private feelings; and next: I have made you the first lady of France.

MME. THIERS. For that I have thanked you as warmly as is customary in our circle.

THIERS. How, may I ask?

MME. THIERS. I have never made you ridiculous. (*Hoofbeats outside*)

THIERS (*cuttingly*). Forgive me that I must also think of the fate of France.

AN OFFICER (*enters, followed by the Minister*). Mr. President. Announcement from General Vinoy. Situation disquieting. Paris has risen. The soldiers refuse to fire on the crowd.

THIERS. My plans have been badly carried out. Why didn't the general sound the drums and mobilize the reliable part of the National Guard? There are fifty thousand men.

THE OFFICER. The National Guard has been mobilized.

THIERS. How many reported?

THE OFFICER. Six hundred.

THIERS. Any more good news?

THE OFFICER. Generals Lecomte and Thomas have been taken prisoners. They will probably be shot.

THE MINISTER. Terrible.

THE OFFICER. The mob is as if insane. Captain le Fort's horse was shot under him. At the same instant a pack of women

threw themselves on to the unfortunate animal and cut it in pieces with their knives.

THIERS (*rings the bell*). Elise! Go in and get ready to leave. At once.

MME. THIERS. Does this mean that we are to flee from Paris?

THIERS. It is not a question of flight when a general sets off for a battle. I'll wait for you here.

(*The servant opens the door for Mme. Thiers, who goes out.*)

(*To the servant*) Have the carriage at the door in five minutes. Pack only the necessary things. (*To the officer*) You are responsible for our escort. (*Shouts after the servant.*) Don't forget the camp bed! The time has come. Now it is they or we. My plan is made. My headquarters will be in Versailles. From there my armies will crush these dwarfs. I have France behind me. All patriotic forces will flock around me, in national unity around the Fatherland.

THE OFFICER. You forget that the soldiers cannot be relied upon, Mr. President.

THIERS. I forget nothing! I see the way out, where you see only confusion and hopelessness.

THE MINISTER. To what way out do you refer?

THIERS. Herr von Bismarck. The Germans will help us. I shall demand a hundred thousand French soldiers from the German prison camps and I shall get them. In this moment old enmities are forgotten, for here values are threatened which go beyond national boundaries: property and the law. (*Mme. Thiers and the servant enter.*)

THIERS. Close the shutters. Lock the house after us. Is the carriage at the door? (*The servant helps him on with his coat, then closes the shutters.*)

MME. THIERS (*quietly*). This reminds me of the days in July '48. I remember how you came home one evening from a crowd that had attacked you. You wept with fear.

THIERS. Not for myself, but for France! (*Cuttingly*) What is this that you dare to say to me? Yes. It must be the spring that's too much for you. It's the spring that has made them mad out yonder. (*The servant now closes the last shutter. The stage becomes completely dark.*) Let's be off. I will make it a bloody spring for them.

ACT II

A screen-like set, divided into three rooms, at the front of the stage. Important passages in the life of the Commune take place here; but the most crucial one takes place in the room behind, where the last scene of the act is played.

SCENE I

First room (to the left): A corner of a room in the City Hall. It is dark. The clock strikes twelve. Varlin enters and lights a gas jet. Beslay is lying fully clad on a camp bed. Varlin sits down at the table and begins to work. Both wear the red sash of the Commune across their chests.

BESLAY. Citizen Varlin, try to get a little sleep. In barely an hour a meeting of the Commune begins, and it's sure to be both long and tiring.

VARLIN. I can't sleep. I haven't time.

BESLAY. You're not more than thirty, are you, Varlin? But your hair has turned white. You'll crack up if you keep on like this.

VARLIN (*smiling*). Look after yourself, Citizen Beslay. You haven't had your clothes off in two weeks.

BESLAY. No, that's just what my wife said, too, when she came with my lunch. "Seventy-six years old," she said, "and acting like this, you who were supposed to be at death's door . . ."

VARLIN. Isn't it grand that we're not in our grave, Beslay? Do you know the deepest feeling I have these days? It's gratitude—for every day, every hour, every minute. We've got a chance. Make use of it! *Make use of it!* (*Looks through the papers.*) It's beginning to look a bit more reasonable, isn't it? It was a big help when people got their things out of the pawnshops and no longer had to worry about their debts—and it will be better now when we turn the closed factories over to the workers. If only we had more help. We are so few! I was up

in the Department of Labor today to get some important information; there wasn't one of the old officials left, they had all cleared out to Versailles. Then I thought: These people who will not help us—help us *now*!—are not our opponents, they are criminals.

BESLAY. But there are some good fellows among them just the same! The Governor of the Bank of France, with whom I have to do almost every day, is a splendid fellow. Conscientious and always amiable, although it's not exactly small amounts I ask of him! But yesterday he frightened me, even if it was just in fun. "If I give you this money now," he said, "who will guarantee to me that every last member of the Commune won't be shot within a couple of weeks?"

VARLIN. He can spare himself that worry. The revolution is over, work has begun. The Versailles troops have not yet attacked; for every hour that passes it becomes more obviously impossible that they will.

BESLAY. Are you quite sure of that, Citizen Varlin?

VARLIN. The soldiers won't go against us, because we have shown that we intend to be just. Land for the farmer, tools for the worker, work for everybody—who's going to give his life against that?

BESLAY. I believe as you do, Citizen Varlin, that our work will be our defense. The others will respect us. That's why I was glad when they agreed to my proposal that the members of the Commune should not have more than fifteen francs a day, exactly what a competent workman can earn. And yet it's ministries we're in charge of, most of us. So they may call us robbers and bandits all they like. People will understand that we are not the ones who are robbing them! And that will spike the ugly lie that people have been poisoned with so long: that greed is the mainspring of all good work. Oh, no, history tells a different story, and I have done a little reading myself, too. All progress is created in unselfishness. And what a joy, what a hope there is in this: that working people can manage to govern

themselves! We've got to succeed, Varlin. Well, it's no time to be lying here. (*Gets up.*)

VARLIN. Oh, by the way, while I think of it, I found something in the accounts today that you must have overlooked.

BESLAY. Really?

VARLIN. Yes, with all this pressure of work, you have approved much too low a tender on uniforms for the soldiers of the Commune.

BESLAY. I remember that very well indeed. I considered it proper to observe the most rigid economy.

VARLIN. You forget that the seamstresses who used to get six francs a garment now get only four. They could manage to live somehow on six francs. On four it's impossible.

BESLAY. Citizen Varlin, in these times we must all make sacrifices. Our budget must be marked by level-headedness and moderation. In that way we can make our position safe.

VARLIN. The people of Paris have risen against the exploiters and put them to flight. We cannot give them a wage that not even the men we have driven out would have dared to offer.

BESLAY. I did it with the best intentions.

VARLIN. I'm sure of that. I don't know a more just person than you. (*Looks up from his papers.*) Tomorrow I hope we can get three of the factories that have been shut down going again. Doesn't that make you happy?

BESLAY. It certainly does.

VARLIN (*gets up*). It means seven hundred men at work, seven hundred homes will have a life worthy of human beings, seven hundred homes which thereby preserve the peace! (*At the window*) What a wonderful night! Not a shot. Not one of our men crippled. No women crying. This is peace. Oh, if I could only get everybody to realize what peace is. It's not something you own, it's something you have to conquer. The child taking its first halting steps across the floor, the trees turning green out in the street, your wife breathing in the darkness beside you—for all of this you have to fight and keep on fighting. It's always

threatened; every day you must guard it from harm by vindicating human dignity. If you've had a dead day, then you have betrayed everything you love. *Then you are war.* Peace, Beslay, must be the most unresting thing in the world.

BESLAY (*eagerly*). There's one thing I'd like to strike a blow for, Citizen Varlin. It's for the journeymen bakers. Just think of it, they never have the evenings free when other people enjoy the benefits of improving companionship. (*Thunder of cannon.*) What was that? It's impossible. So it had to be that way after all. The civil war has begun.

DELESCLUZE (*enters*). The decision has come. The Versailles troops are attacking. Now we must all think of just one thing: fighting.

VARLIN (*musingly to Beslay*). If the bakers start at five o'clock in the morning, they ought to be able to manage, Citizen Beslay.

DELESCLUZE. We have no time for this now.

VARLIN. Oh yes, we have.

DELESCLUZE. When the army storms the city, what then?

VARLIN. On the eighteenth of March we swore brotherhood with the soldiers.

DELESCLUZE. But this time it's new soldiers from the German prison camps. They have been well fed and have learned to obey and hate under Thiers' personal supervision.

VARLIN. If it comes to the worst, we can say to the soldiers: "Come into our homes! Here are our workshops! We have done everything as well as we could. Can you hate us?" Delescluze, isn't it possible, just for once, to win, not by killing or dying, but by creating justice? To create and create only! There's where the victory lies, the most difficult kind.

DELESCLUZE. Our fight will be bloodier.

VARLIN. Then we lose. We who desire progress can never win with weapons. That is our tragedy, and it is our shining, despairing hope. We shall go to war divided between regard for human life and murder. We shall not do our peaceful work

well enough, and we shall be amateurs at killing. Let us never forget this: those who desire war with their whole being—*they will be victorious!* Yes! From childhood on they aim their whole existence—like the barrel of a gun—toward murder: they give the best years of their youth to becoming specialists in annihilation. Who can resist them? Ah, Delescluze, they will win a great victory—over a lifeless world, round about them and within themselves.

DELESCLUZE. What ghastly world is this you've been looking into?

VARLIN. Ghastly? So great is my faith in mankind that I believe if it possesses hopelessness, it also possesses hope. Only we must see clearly that the world is faced with a choice: is our weapon to be violence or regard for human life? Whoever chooses both shall lose.

DELESCLUZE (*cries out*). Lose? No. Not that word. I have had one profession for forty years. Being defeated. Another defeat I neither can nor will survive! (*Quietly*) Go on with your work, Varlin. But you are exposing yourself to one danger. When the Versailles troops force their way into the city and massacre your fighting comrades, it may happen that you will be spared.

VARLIN (*looking him in the eye*). That danger, then, I must avoid. Perhaps I am not so afraid to die.

DELESCLUZE (*happily*). I knew you weren't!

VARLIN. Still, it is barbarism! Courage to die—there's something so second-rate about it. The only thing that's worth anything is to get something done.

DELESCLUZE (*embracing him*). But we shall *win!* We shall win for the sake of life and the future, and for your sake, madman! (*He hurries out.*)

VARLIN (*turns eagerly to Beslay*). I think your plan is excellent, Citizen Beslay! Let's say that the work begins at five o'clock, then we'll have fresh bread an hour later. How will that do? They can set the dough before they go home at noon.

Then they'll have the evening free to discuss the problems of the times.

BESLAY. I shall make a motion to that effect at the first opportunity.

VARLIN. This very night! I shall support you as strongly as I can. What a relief it will be for them! (*Sits down at the table.*) Can you imagine, Beslay, how anybody in the world, yes, in the whole world, has time to sleep? (*Smiling*) Or time to die? (*The thunder of cannon becomes stronger. Darkness.*)

SCENE 2

The stairs at the right: Wounded and beaten Communards come up. They are returning home from the first battle with the Versailles troops outside of Paris. A cluster of men and women, among them Lucien, Pauline, and Louis, stand waiting for them at the top of the stairs. The First Woman (from the opening scene) looks keenly and anxiously at each one that comes.

FIRST WOMAN (*stopping Martin*). Where's my husband? You and he were together. Where is he?

MARTIN (*with a bandage around his head*). He stayed out there. (*The woman stands for a moment in speechless despair, then turns and goes.*)

LUCIEN (*to Martin*). Did you have to run away?

MARTIN. Nobody could advance against that fire. The cannon were not the worst, it was the machine guns. We tried again and again, but we were mowed down, swept back.

LUCIEN. Surely you could have run up and taken the machine guns from them.

MARTIN. You don't know what you're talking about.

LOUIS. Oh, yes, I do. Some of us will get to the machine guns all right, and then they'll learn the taste of it themselves. Shall we try it, boys?

THE CROWD OF PEOPLE. Yes! On to Versailles! (*Armed men and women march singing down the stairs.*)

PAULINE (*among the leaders in the singing*).

He loves freedom
As I love him—
Better die with honor
Than live in shame!
Onward then all,
Even though we fall,
For he loves freedom
As I love him!

SCENE 3

Second room (in the center): The lights come up. It is a sidewalk restaurant just near the Place Vendôme. The shadow of the Vendôme column with the figure of Napoleon falls on the wall. Students pass by outside shouting: "Long live Courbet!"

Courbet and Beslay are sitting at a table.

COURBET (*rises and stands in all his might, with his red sash, in the sun*). Thank you, my friends! (*Sits down again.*) What a joy it is to be alive now, Beslay! Do you know, there have actually been times in my life when I was surrounded by such lack of understanding that I said to myself: "Gustave, don't study any more, don't progress any further, or you will be *too* lonely!" Now I'll make short work of it. As member of the Commune, as President of the artists! Away with juries and officialdom and authority! Give the young people a chance to find themselves, God bless them, out into the sunshine with them! I'll tell you something, Beslay. It's when a man is no longer any good for a woman that he turns to authority. Why the devil should we let ourselves be governed by the impotent? For life is movement and growth, man! Let Nature be your

teacher, for Nature always knows what's right. Yes, sir, a snappish winter day may perhaps try on a little authority, but along comes the spring with green leaves and brown brooks and giddy girls and gives him and his authority a good kick in the rear. Now we shall tear down a little of the ugliness that's full of authority and keeps people from thinking. Away with the war monuments! Away with the Vendôme column, for it's the worst of them.

BESLAY. I'll give you my full support, Citizen Courbet.

COURBET. Can you conceive of such a hideous idea? To have a column cast from twelve hundred cannon, taken from other people, with reliefs of murder and suffering winding their way to the top, and, to crown it all, your own statue? Screw the whole mess off, I say, and give Napoleon a whack on his bronze behind as he lies there on the hillside. Good Lord, Beslay, people are good, you know, they want to love and work and breathe in the pure air. Why shall they be taught to murder each other? And that's what Napoleon does up there with his cursed authority. Of course you know what his nephew, Louis Bonaparte, said before he was elected Emperor and could get started with his wars? "That man up there," he said, "is my best voter." And that's how it will always be. He'll stand there and vote for war and honor and swinishness, if we don't overthrow him. I'd have had him down out of that long ago, if I'd had my way. You probably read the letter I wrote during the siege to the German army?

BESLAY. I certainly did.

COURBET. "Come on with your cannon," I wrote, "and we'll melt them down with ours and set up a new column on the Place Vendôme, a column for Germany and France, for the people, for peace." Can you conceive of anything simpler and more just? But that Bismarck fellow was so rude as not to reply. He's of exactly the same kind as that bandit up there. But otherwise the Germans are perfectly splendid people, Beslay, progressive people, they rate my art very high. There are pic-

tures of mine hanging in Berlin, Munich, and Düsseldorf. Why, bless your soul, I was a tremendous sensation when I was in Germany, in every way. One day a young baroness came up to my studio, pale, breathless, but very shy. "I *had* to see you!" she exclaimed. "I couldn't wait any longer. You look like an Assyrian prince." It was about her that I made my famous remark: "I'll have her if I have to use a crowbar." Why shouldn't we be friends with the Germans?

BESLAY. Why not? It's peace we want! When we tear down the column, Citizen Courbet, it will be a blow against militarism that will be heard the world over. With the fall of that column we shall tell the truth about the Versailles generals. For what we want is simply good will and justice.

COURBET. And then we'll melt down the whole contraption into copper coins, millions of them, and with them the children shall buy warm, fragrant bread. Yes, we'll do big things! (*Drinks.*) There's just one thing that's sad about it: I don't get any painting done. It's spring now at home in Ornans. I have a donkey up there that pulls my painting things along on a little cart. His name is Jerome, after a professor at the Academy of Art. I should have been in the woods today, the roes are frisking in the green darkness. When I'm homesick for them here in Paris, I always blow a horn, then I see them quite clearly among the trees. Would you like to hear it, Beslay? Today I took the horn up into the ministry with me, into my office, I couldn't help it. (*Blows the horn.*) Can't you see the deer in front of you?

BESLAY. Yes.

COURBET. There's something so pathetic about roes. I feel it more strongly from year to year. They're so fragile. (*Rests his head on his hands; with painful longing.*) So slender! What peace there is in a forest like that, Beslay! I love it. (*A grenade falls not far away. Colonel Rossel and Delescluze enter.*)

DELESCLUZE. Citizen Rossel has just returned from the front. He has heart-rending things to tell. Citizen Beslay, you

will have to help here. You must use all your influence as President of the Commune. We need the support of all. Yours, too, Courbet.

ROSSEL. It can't go on like this. I must have more authority if I am to save Paris. Our troops have no discipline. If the soldiers don't like their officers, they simply dismiss them, just like that. It is their right in accordance with the decision of the Commune; this right must be taken from them. I must have officers who can measure up to those of the enemy. And I have none. None.

COURBET. Why is it that no officer will fight for us; for justice?

ROSSEL. An army is built on authority; and authority can ill afford to be disturbed by new, half-baked ideas. To think is to doubt. It is not salutary—either for those who must command or those who must obey. That's why we have no army and no officers.

COURBET. Authority—shall we never be done with that word? But now I understand all of a sudden why many men are eager to be officers. It's the mediocre man's big chance to be God. The sterile can cheat themselves into a feeling of power; that's why they hate us who desire that only those who create—who increase—shall be heard. You are fortunate, Citizen Rosset, for you stand at the head of men who may have their faults but who are yet free, thinking human beings.

ROSSEL. I have a job to do, Citizen Courbet: to drive back the Versailles troops. And you people refuse me the means. To hell with free, thinking human beings, if only they can be used to fight.

BESLAY. Those are ill-judged words, Citizen Rosset. (*Rigault enters.*)

DELESCLUZE. But we must understand him!

ROSSEL. I shall tell you the truth right to your faces: if our soldiers do not obey authority just as blindly as the Versailles troops, the Commune is lost. Now you have your choice. (*Goes.*)

COURBET. What does he mean?

RIGAULT. Another revolution once produced its Bonaparte. That's what he meant.

COURBET. That shall never happen!

BESLAY. Will he betray what we are fighting for?

RIGAULT. As long as I live: No. (*Darkness.*)

SCENE 4

The stairs at the right: Twilight. A National Guardsman stands watch on the wall. Pierre sits smoking.

THE GUARDSMAN. The password!

COLONEL ROSSEL (*from below*). My life for the Commune!

GUARDSMAN. Proceed! (*Rossel comes up the stairs.*)

ROSSEL. Citizen Lasalle, you were one of those who left their posts last night without permission.

PIERRE (*gets up sullenly*). Yes.

ROSSEL. Where were you?

PIERRE. In the city.

ROSSEL. I give you today a last warning. You must understand that we cannot fight without discipline.

PIERRE. Discipline! Oh, I see. So that's what we're to fight for. That's not what it was called the other day. Then it was called freedom.

ROSSEL. But, man, we're trying to win freedom by fighting for it.

PIERRE. I thought we already had it, I did. If not, what were you all going round shouting hurrah for? It's all just a lot of big words and baloney. You expect me to lie out here and fight and perhaps get killed; but I'm not to enjoy freedom a single day, try if I can make use of it, see whether it's all it's cracked up to be. Win it by fighting? Win what? I'm through with this. (*Starts to go.*)

ROSSEL (*draws his revolver*). Halt!

PIERRE. You'll have to shoot a lot of us then. This isn't Versailles, you know.

ROSSEL (*puts back his revolver*). You're mad. But you're in the majority, and I must take the consequences.

PIERRE. You're damn right I'm going. I want to have a look at this freedom first. I want to know what I'm fighting for. (*He goes down the stairs.*)

SCENE 5

Third room (to the right): Private room in a restaurant on the Champs Elysée. Rigault sits eating. A Catholic priest stands in front of his table. In the background, in semidarkness, sit two of Rigault's secret service agents, Brunel and Pellerin. The waiter opens a new bottle of champagne and pours for Rigault.

RIGAULT (*wipes his mouth with his napkin and leafs through some papers*). Your position?

THE PRIEST. A servant of the Lord.

RIGAULT. Your employer's address?

THE PRIEST. Everywhere.

RIGAULT. Everywhere? Yes. The curious vagrant by whom you are allegedly employed has indeed fine, large houses everywhere—in the most wretched country town and in the most miserable slum. Where He lives, one can always count on finding treasures hidden—and in certain cases also weapons. To prison with the priest!

(Pellerin leads the priest out into the passage way, where we catch a glimpse of armed National Guardsmen. He comes back again immediately.)

(Peeling a pear; to Brunel) There are complaints that you mistreat the prisoners. Beslay, Varlin, and half the Commune are wild with rage. Yes, thank you! I know what you will say: that you were whipped yourself when you were in the penal colony. But the question is: have I given you orders to do so?

BRUNEL. No.

RIGAULT (*threateningly*). And still! (*Drinks.*) It is absolutely remarkable what a sure instinct you have. A little mistreatment now, *rumors about it*, would not be at all out of the way. But it's got to stop now, and this is serious! Do you understand?

BRUNEL. Yes.

RIGAULT. These idiots with whom I sit in the Commune have no idea what is involved. They think all I have to do is punish the crimes that the *bourgeoisie commits*. But it is the crimes that people are still only *thinking about* we have to root out.

PELLERIN. True words.

RIGAULT. Was it "true words" you said? (*Beckons him over to him.*) Perhaps you think your little tricks are part of my plan? This morning during the search you stole three thousand francs. Shut up. I had my informer after you, nobody shall feel himself safe. I have sworn to keep Paris free of criminal acts. Arrest him!

PELLERIN. But, Citizen Rigault—

RIGAULT. If you're not as quiet as a mouse, you'll be shot.

(*Brunel leads Pellerin to the door where two National Guardsmen receive him.*)

(*To Brunel*) Go and get me a woman. Let her wait for me till I come. But it mustn't be any of those out there in the restaurant. Nobody who knows me. Make sure she is healthy. That nigger wench you came trailing along with the other day I had to send at once to the hospital for syphilis. If that happens once again, I'll have you shot for an attempt against the public safety.

A YOUNG GIRL (*obviously from a good, bourgeois home, forces her way into the room*). Citizen Rigault, I must speak with you.

BRUNEL (*with a leer*). Perhaps I shan't need to—

RIGAULT. Certainly! (*Brunel goes out.*)

THE YOUNG GIRL. My father was arrested a week ago.

We haven't heard anything from him. Mother cries all day. Now I've come to you.

RIGAULT. Get out. Your father is a great scoundrel.

THE YOUNG GIRL. He's no such thing! And besides you don't even know his name.

RIGAULT. Don't need to know it either.

THE YOUNG GIRL. You can't let us suffer like this.

RIGAULT. Oh, yes, I can. That's the least of my tricks.

THE YOUNG GIRL. You can have everything I own.

RIGAULT. And that's yourself, I suppose? Didn't I guess as much! Do you think that's such a lot then?

THE YOUNG GIRL. Yes.

RIGAULT. I have no hankering to go to bed with a martyr.

THE YOUNG GIRL. I shall not be a martyr.

RIGAULT. Have to look at you. I really believe you're telling the truth. But don't you think it is a little too much charity toward a single family if I both release a big scoundrel and give his daughter a pleasant night? (*Shouts.*) Put this little fool out the door. (*The National Guardsmen lead her out. The waiter pours cognac and lights Rigault's cigar. René enters.*) Sit down. I hear you have moved in with your old flame Sylvie Gérard. So it may go for the poor student, if only there's a revolution! It's so beautiful that I could weep! The most edifying thing about this affair of yours is that my work has not been in vain. They're beginning to feel it, too—even in that set which thinks only of amusing itself.

RENÉ. What do they feel?

RIGAULT. *Fear.*

RENÉ. Couldn't it be for my own sake?

RIGAULT. What's she after, anyway? Is it her father confessor she wants to release? Very amusing! Come on with your report. I'm really excited. From you I expect quality work.

RENÉ. Maurice Verrier is spying for Versailles.

RIGAULT. Source?

RENÉ. The porter in his house. That vermin we've got to

destroy, Rigault. He's rich, he exploits others. It's hideous, we used to say, but that isn't so! It's beautiful, that's the funny thing. He sits on his English blood-horse, elegant and erect, because others go bowed and tortured for his sake.

RIGAULT. Next.

RENÉ. Henri Bergeron is supporting Thiers with money.

RIGAULT. Source?

RENÉ. His servant has informed on him.

RIGAULT (*smacks his lips over this*). Ingratiating, liberal-minded, patron of the arts—Ah, well, where his treasure is, there will his heart be also.

RENÉ. Did you say "patron"? A miserable thief, that's what he is. He has stolen from what should belong to all, and now he portions it out with fine dignity. What a flattering background he has got for himself of sponging, humiliated geniuses! Isn't he irresistible—ironical, lonely, abused—superman of the geniuses? In the new society, Rigault, we shall honor a thousand times more the most wretched and most stagnant artist who today cheats him out of a hundred francs.

RIGAULT. I shall complete your list. Guy Martinac. Roger Mauritort. Marcel Barrès—

RENÉ. No! Not Marcel Barrès.

RIGAULT. Oh, yes. Marcel Barrès, too. They have all been Sylvie Gérard's lovers. Does she torture you like that? It's your punishment for having such vulgar taste.

RENÉ. You are speaking about the most beautiful woman in Paris.

RIGAULT. Exactly. A true connoisseur collects undiscovered paintings and undiscovered women. Vanity carries its own punishment with it: the acknowledged presupposes *acknowledgers*.

RENÉ. They've bought her with their cursed money. Exterminate them! I'll have nobody sitting round with lecherous memories possessing her. They shall not look at her and smile and remember. Let me kill them! I'll crush their faces to a pulp. I'll fix their smiles—

RIGAULT (*rings*). And with an emotional life like this you dare to come here with four—four—names? You have the gossip and smiles of a whole city to whet your hate on and you can't lie together more than this. (*A National Guardsman enters.*) Arrest—(*René bows his head.*)—these four citizens. (*He gives him the list, the National Guardsman goes out.*)

RIGAULT. In you I have no confidence, but I do rely on Mademoiselle Gérard's business sense. Given her free will, I believe she sleeps by preference with the enemy of the working class.

RENÉ. Why must you too torture me?

RIGAULT. Because I despise you. This work should be as passionless as mathematics, and you come along with your poor little personal mess. I'm through with you. Go.

VARLIN (*stands in the doorway. René goes out past him*). It's certainly no pleasure to find you here.

RIGAULT. Don't say that. Be gay with the gay.

VARLIN. You are a dishonorable man, Citizen Rigault. We have decided the members of the Commune are to have fifteen francs a day. You use a thousand. You steal from little people! You are bringing us into ill repute with your unscrupulous life.

RIGAULT. Ill repute with whom? Say it right out: With the *bourgeoisie*. I act as I find proper. My goal is not first and foremost to be economical, but effective. So I leave it to you and yours to run round to committee meetings and get nothing done.

VARLIN. Can't you fill your post without cheating?

RIGAULT. Magnificent Varlin, unimpeachable, incorruptible Varlin! If *you* used a sou more than fifteen francs a day, I'd have you arrested. You must work for the journeyman bakers; you must go to bed tired in the evening with a good conscience; everything in your existence shouts with one voice: fifteen francs. My work is different. My nerves must be naked, my suspicion unresting, I must know and anticipate everything that happens in Paris. To cope with this problem I don't need sober, level-

headed joy in work like you. I need whiskey and whores, and I intend to have them.

VARLIN. I'm ashamed of you. One of the goals of the Commune is to do away with prostitution. It's revolting that one of our own members should cynically exploit these unfortunates.

RIGAULT. Do away with all you can, just so long as there are enough left for me. What kind of females would you recommend for me? There are plenty of them who want to get something out of me; they are out of the question. And I don't intend to misuse some pathetic hangman's wife who would gladly "share" my worries! My work is to be alone. Hence: whores.

VARLIN. When I hear you talk like that, Citizen Rigault, I must ask you in horror: have we not made this revolution to vindicate human values?

RIGAULT. No, and again, no! Our first duty is to annihilate. Your petty-bourgeois decency in reality prolongs the old. If I am nothing but a microbe that creates decay, I am still a more useful man.

VARLIN. Is decay our goal?

RIGAULT. When everything is destroyed, reason shall build a new world from the bottom up. In that I shall have no part. Shouldn't have. (*Drinks.*) What do you want?

VARLIN. I'll summon you before the Commune at once, Citizen Rigault. Day and night I receive complaints over your arbitrary and unjust arrests. You are said to have shot people without even a trial. You must be taught that the Commune is against terror and bloodshed.

RIGAULT. Tell me, Citizen Varlin, could you imagine dying for the Commune?

VARLIN. Yes.

RIGAULT. And yet you dare to tell me that you are against bloodshed? You will shed your own blood, but not that of others. It might perhaps occur to you that you are in the grip of a very old and very reactionary conception, in point of fact, the

Christian? You may be as fearless as you like and vote for the destruction of churches and the abolition of the clergy, but you have an insatiable appetite for defeat, for suicide. Isn't it time we had got beyond that? It is undeniable that in a revolution there are certain people who are simply incapable of understanding. They are so passionately attached to property and tradition that at the first opportunity they will rise up and resist to the death. The most expedient thing is to liquidate them.

VARLIN. No! This is inhuman talk.

RIGAULT. Citizen Varlin, I have grown up in a peculiarly hypocritical milieu, and this anxiety to which you now give expression, I am familiar with to the point of nausea. Bourgeois society accepts *war*, the blind, confused annihilation of unknown destinies. But terror—the logical destruction of definite enemies—is regarded with horror. Why? Because human beings do not dare to acknowledge their own nature; when they murder, they want to murder in the dark. But I will murder in the full daylight of my reason.

VARLIN. No one can hate war in every form more than I do. For all violence creates violence.

RIGAULT. It would have been correct if you had said: "Weak violence creates violence." But strong, annihilating violence creates peace. (*Gets up.*) You have no idea how dangerous the situation is. Do you think our soldiers will be able to hold the front? No. And back of them they have a city where treachery is not an isolated episode but a business. A battalion of our men is offered to Versailles for five thousand francs, a city gate for ten thousand. Hatred and revenge wait only for the collapse to pounce down. I must not be halted at every step I take. I shall succeed if I am left in peace. For I have the will to take the responsibility not only for my own death—like you—but for that of others. (*Gets up suddenly in front of Varlin.*) Be on your guard! It has happened before now that revolution has killed its own.

VARLIN. I shall oppose you to my last breath, for your course

is the way of death. It is on your account that even our friends are losing all sympathy for the revolution.

RIGAULT. Say that once more. It's magnificent. *Sympathy for the revolution!* The common conception of life's greatest moment is the hour when a woman gives birth to a child. It sometimes happens that she bellows with pain, roars like an animal, sinks her teeth in the hand that would show her its sympathy. *All new life is born in blood. (Darkness.)*

SCENE 6

The stairs at the left: The Archbishop of Paris and several clerics, surrounded by National Guardsmen; some of the soldiers carry blazing torches.

THE CAPTAIN OF THE NATIONAL GUARD. Citizen Archbishop, you are arrested in the name of the Commune for having conspired with the Versailles government.

THE ARCHBISHOP. My child, you must listen to me.

THE CAPTAIN. Shut up. We are not children here, we are citizens.

THE ARCHBISHOP (*grasps his crucifix*). The Crucified One will forgive you.

THE CAPTAIN. I remember the time my father was condemned to death by court martial in '48. There was a gigantic crucifix hanging over the head of the officer who read out the sentence. The Crucified One was to bless the murder, and He did so. That's how it has been every time freedom and hope were to be struck down. And today the Crucified One is marching straight and stiff at the head of the Versailles troops. The nails that went through His hands are to be used to pierce our hearts and our children's. Oh, no! We know you. Away with Him! (*The Archbishop is led down the stairs in the midst of the soldiers.*)

SCENE 7

The stairs at the right: Colonel Rossel, captured and surrounded by National Guardsmen.

ROSSEL (*to the Captain of the National Guard, who stands with a paper in his hand*). You can save yourself the trouble of reading it. Greet Citizen Rigault and say that I ask for nothing better than a prison cell.

THE CAPTAIN. You admit then that you have treacherously surrendered the forts to the Versailles officers? *To your former colleagues, Citizen Rossel?*

ROSSEL. Nonsense. Nobody can fight without soldiers. Nobody can wage war when everybody talks and nobody obeys. If I am longing for a cell, it's because there's a faint possibility that the walls will be silent. (*Delescluze comes up the stairs.*) Congratulate me, Delescluze. I'm being sent to gaol. I shall have peace.

DELESCLUZE. Who's to take over the command?

ROSSEL. You. The Commune has decided. I could have wished you a better fate.

DELESCLUZE. I can't do it.

ROSSEL. You will be forced to. You are the only one on whom all rely.

DELESCLUZE. I cannot undertake this terrible responsibility. Why, I know nothing about conducting a war.

ROSSEL. That's your good fortune. If you knew anything about it, you would be shot by your own men. (*Rossel is led down the stairs.*)

DELESCLUZE (*shouts after him*). Rossel! You must help me, Rossel! (*Roll of drums.*)

SCENE 8

During the last scene on the stairs the whole screen set glides aside. Within, in the darkness, we hear Rigault's voice, exhorting, inciting, interrupted by the roll of drums.

RIGAULT. Arrest him! Search the house! You're a traitor. So is he. So is he. They're all traitors. I'll have them shot . . .

It becomes deathly still. The light is turned on. A huge, white-lacquered room with pillars. In gold letters shines the inscription above the columns: BANQUE DE FRANCE. It is the Governor's office. A strip of red carpet runs from the writing table straight across the shining white floor. In this enormous, silent, aristocratic room sit two men in conversation. They are the Vice Governor of the bank, the Marquis de Ploeuc, and the secret emissary from the Versailles government, M. Debrun.

THE GOVERNOR. M. Thiers shall of course get what he wants. We must proceed with the greatest caution, but I think I can promise that the hundred million francs shall be in Versailles in the course of the night.

DEBRUN. M. Thiers asked me to tell you that never has any amount from the Bank of France done the Fatherland a greater service than this, which is organizing an army to crush socialism.

THE GOVERNOR. Give M. Thiers my greetings and say that his army should not delay too long.

DEBRUN. In a week the rebellion will be crushed. Our officers and soldiers have but one will: victory.

THE GOVERNOR. You believe, I suppose, that our fate will be decided in a week by our brave and invincible army.

DEBRUN. What do you mean?

THE GOVERNOR. In the vaults here there are assets of two and a half billion francs. The moment the Commune lays hands on this money, it's all up with us. They will then have the means for anything: for weapons, for grandiose social experiments, and most important of all: for bribes. Our fate will be decided within these four walls; *here* is the front, and I alone am holding it.

DEBRUN. Marquis, I admire you for remaining at this exposed post at a time when so many have fled.

THE GOVERNOR. For me there has been no choice. And for every day I remain, I am the more deeply and sincerely attached to this place. To think that one single man should suddenly carry on his shoulders the responsibility for everything that exists, for the ordered life of society, for the civilization of his country. That responsibility is mine. It is terrifying, but it is also a great joy. It is a distinction given to few.

DEBRUN. But there is constant danger—

THE GOVERNOR. Yes. However, there is one bright spot. When the Commune was appointing a delegate to the Bank of France, they chose the most honest man they had, old Beslay. That has saved us, at least so far. For what is it that gives a man a reputation for honesty in this poor milieu out of which the Commune has sprung? Respect for small sums. Oh, old Beslay is a thoroughly honest man. He has kept a careful account all his life of every sou he has earned, he is filled with awe and anxiety when he demands a million francs. *But he does not get them!* I create a mood of catastrophe around every demand he makes, not because a million francs is of importance to the Bank of France, but because I want to restrict his mind to the idea of small amounts. I assure you, M. Debrun, I pray to God every evening that He will let me keep old Beslay. He is a splendid man who desires to create a juster world, but he does not suspect what a billion is. He calls himself a socialist, but he lacks the imagination necessary to overthrow a society. We have stamped him from his childhood with our ideals for little people: thrift and honesty. We have given him a fear of lawlessness. Sometimes in optimistic moments I feel that the existing society has an invincible companion: the socialists' own fear of socialism. But then again I think: a new man, or simply a desperate decision, and it's all up with us.

DEBRUN. Is there any fear that Beslay may be withdrawn?

THE GOVERNOR. I know that Rigault is eager for the post. But I don't think they'll give him the chance. They don't consider him honest enough, he smokes cigarettes at several

francs apiece. For the time being he is fortunately taken up with his comparatively harmless activity of organizing terror and arresting hostages.

DEBRUN. Harmless is not the word for it. Two of my relatives are in prison and may perhaps be put to death. Our esteemed Archbishop faces the same fate.

THE GOVERNOR. I did not mean to hurt your feelings. And allow me for the sake of order to add that my own brother and several of my closest relatives have been imprisoned. I was considering things from a wider angle, and I know that M. Thiers sees it in the same way.

DEBRUN. On the contrary, M. Thiers is extremely upset by Rigault's rule of terror.

THE GOVERNOR. Naturally. But does he lift a finger to save the hostages? He can obtain their freedom the moment he is willing to give the Commune some captured rebels in exchange. I understand M. Thiers. I agree with him. We may feel pain and anger when we think of the unfortunates in prison, and one day we shall avenge them, but we must not let the thought of them determine our actions. If we fulfill any of the Commune's demands, they will make new and more dangerous claims. Then they may happen to lay hands on the only *real* hostages—the gold ingots in the Bank of France. Those I shall defend with my life. But tell M. Thiers that he must hurry with his help. The catastrophe may come at any hour, the movement may take a new direction, the terrorists may be upon us. And in that second M. Thiers' armies are crushed. Good-bye, M. Debrun.

DEBRUN. God be with you. (*He goes. The officer on guard at the Bank, an elderly, devoted man, bearing the stamp of the old régime, enters.*)

THE OFFICER. M. Beslay. (*Beslay enters, the officer withdraws.*)

THE GOVERNOR. What bad news do you bring today?

BESLAY. I have an order to you from Citizen Rigault.

THE GOVERNOR. Sit down.

BESLAY. He demands that the regular guard of the Bank be dismissed and that the building be occupied by a battalion of our people.

THE GOVERNOR. Permit me to say at once: this will not happen.

BESLAY. It is an order.

THE GOVERNOR. I have a different order.

BESLAY. From whom?

THE GOVERNOR. From the government.

BESLAY. I see. I wouldn't have thought it of you. I have relied on your loyalty. I have vouched for you again and again. Now you admit that you take your orders from Versailles.

THE GOVERNOR. I refer to another government. (*Hands Beslay a document.*) Read. It's the regulation for the custody of the Bank.

BESLAY. It's signed . . . "Danton"—And it's dated "March 4, 1792." Danton! To think that Danton wrote on this very paper.

THE GOVERNOR. Yes, this order was issued during the Great Revolution—the epoch on which everything of value in France today is built. I admit that I am not ashamed to obey Citizen Danton in preference to Citizen Rigault.

BESLAY. Personally I have the greatest respect for your feelings, and I shall place the regulation before the Commune this evening.

THE GOVERNOR. I thank you and I depend on you.

BESLAY. The Commune requires a million francs today.

THE GOVERNOR. That sum I cannot give you—deeply as I regret it.

BESLAY. We must have it.

THE GOVERNOR. I couldn't justify such action.

BESLAY. Justify to whom, Citizen de Ploeuc? You owe me an answer to that.

THE GOVERNOR. You shall have it. In a confidential moment

you mentioned that you belonged to something called the International. So do I. The Bank of France is organically interwoven with the economic life of the entire world. If you encroach here, it will be felt in the life of organized society the world over. Factories will close, not only in our own country, but in London, Vienna, and New York. People whom you call comrades will stand idle and hungry and curse you. You are responsible to the Commune; I am responsible to the world. We are both men of ideas; I ask you to respect mine. You cannot have more than five hundred thousand francs.

BESLAY. The Commune needs a million.

THE GOVERNOR. But just consider. Have I personally an interest in accommodating you? To that you must answer unconditionally Yes. You are to plead my case before the Commune this evening. But I cannot give you the money you ask for. Nevertheless, although it is against my most sacred conviction, I will let you have six hundred thousand. To show my good will.

BESLAY. Give me the money. I realize that it is not easy for you, Citizen de Ploeuc. You spoke of good will. Well, that's what I believe in. It's good will that will save the world.

THE GOVERNOR. Exactly. Co-operation! Here is the requisition. (*Leans back in his chair.*) I don't wish to offend you, but I must say I shall be glad when this time is over. Then I shall walk beside a quiet river in Touraine and fish for trout. An early summer morning.

BESLAY. How odd that you should say that! I too am fond of trout fishing.

THE GOVERNOR (*interested*). Oh, really. Where do you fish?

BESLAY. I know several small rivers not far from Paris. I fish there on Sundays.

THE GOVERNOR. On Sundays! You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

BESLAY (*slightly offended*). Citizen de Ploeuc, you forget that I am a freethinker.

THE GOVERNOR. Sometime, in happier circumstances, I hope to have you come and fish at my place. We must often of necessity disagree, but I have learned to respect your incorruptible sense of justice. I can promise you good fishing. Sometimes I catch them up to four pounds.

BESLAY. That may not be for a long time. But there is one thing I should like to say to you. These hours up here with you have not been my worst ones. Here I feel something that it's a good thing to remember, especially in these days—that we are all human beings. (*A shout from outside: "To Arms!" Shots and trumpet signals.*)

THE GOVERNOR (*at the window*). It's the National Guard; they are going to occupy the Bank. You must prevent it. Remember your promise.

BESLAY (*wearily*). I've been against it from the very first.

THE GOVERNOR. Are you powerless to do anything?

BESLAY. If I am, what will you do?

THE GOVERNOR. Fight to the last man. There are four hundred of us on whom I rely as I do on myself. We will fight—first at the door, then in the courtyard, then on the stairs, and finally in the vaults.

THE OFFICER (*enters*). We have barred the doors. A Captain from the National Guard demands to speak with Citizen Beslay.

THE GOVERNOR. Bring him up here under escort. (*The Officer goes out.*)

THE GOVERNOR (*to Beslay*). I'm not afraid of death, but you will have the blood of many men on your head. And one thing you must remember: when the last of us has fallen, then you have *lost*.

THE CAPTAIN OF THE NATIONAL GUARD (*enters*). I come with orders from Citizen Rigault. The Bank is to be occupied.

THE GOVERNOR. The Bank will be defended to the last man.

THE CAPTAIN. Do you believe, Citizen Marquis, that your life is so precious that rather than endanger it we will go quietly home? Citizen Rigault has made mincemeat of more exalted gentlemen than yourself.

BESLAY. I think we must wait until I have presented new and important information to the Commune.

THE CAPTAIN. We shall not wait.

THE GOVERNOR (*to the Captain*). You were following a false line of reasoning just now—that my life makes no difference one way or another. Do you think I'm appealing to your sentimentality, that I'm saying to you: don't kill me because my children will cry over me? I have something more important to say. If you murder me, a twenty-franc note will not be worth the paper it's printed on. It is *confidence* that gives paper money its value. If you murder me, you murder confidence in the Bank of France. Then everybody will know that now law and order no longer rule, but violence, and in the deepest meaning of the word, worthlessness. You say that you wish the workers well; but when you pay the workers their wages after my death, hunger will be the only thing they can buy with them, and you as the people who have paid out this worthless money will have become swindlers. (*Icily, cuttingly*) Go ahead. Storm the bank, murder indiscriminately, betray the workers!

BESLAY. Citizen Captain, as President of the Commune I command you to withdraw the soldiers.

THE CAPTAIN. And if I do not obey?

BESLAY. Then you will have to kill me, too.

THE CAPTAIN. I make you responsible for this, Citizen Beslay.

BESLAY. I will take the responsibility. (*The Captain goes out.*) This evening I shall resign from the Commune. I am an old man and I have not the strength for any more such incidents.

THE GOVERNOR (*earnestly*). You have no right to shirk your duties as a citizen! You must use your authority to stop this lawlessness. You must promise me not to resign. Do you hear? I simply cannot do without you.

ACT III

A large barricade, on two levels, cuts off the street. Lucien, Pauline, Louis, Marie, Michel, Martin, René, and many other workers up on the barricade. At the extreme right there is a narrow passage along the wall of the building. Here Maurice is standing watch with a rifle, in a uniform much too big for him. A Gentleman and Lady, extremely nervous, try to hurry past.

MAURICE (*stopping them*). A stone!

GENTLEMAN (*excitedly*). Can't you hear that the shooting is coming closer? We must get to a safe place.

MAURICE. A stone! Everybody must lay a stone.

LUCIEN (*who is standing almost overhead of the couple*). Did you say a safe place?

PAULINE. Why don't you throw off your coat and stay here and fight?

LUCIEN. For you're on our side, of course—aren't you?

GENTLEMAN. I am for the people! Unconditionally! Let us pass.

LUCIEN. A stone, damn it! (*The Gentleman hastily places a stone on the barricade. Guy and Rose come wandering in.*)

GUY (*to the Lady*). Hot grenades! Hot grenade fragments for sale! Just fallen. Right over there!

LADY (*frightened out of her wits, to the Gentleman*). I can't bear any more. You must come now!

ROSE. Only two francs!

PAULINE (*mimics*). She can't bear any more, do you hear?

MAURICE (*lowering his rifle, persuasively*). I really think you ought to buy one as a souvenir.

GENTLEMAN (*has finished with the stone*). Watch out there, boy. Your rifle might go off.

MAURICE. Well, I suppose that's what a rifle's for.

GENTLEMAN (*giving Rose a coin*). Here's some money, you little . . .

MAURICE. What was that you said? I believe it was "Long live the Commune!" Once again!

LUCIEN. That's right. Once again!

GENTLEMAN (*his teeth chattering*). Long live the Commune! (*Hurries out with the Lady, followed by laughter.*)

LUCIEN (*to René*). Hand up some stones here. (*René hoists them up.*)

LOUIS (*wiping the sweat off his forehead*). I think that will do the job all right. Just let them come now.

LUCIEN. Toss up your rifle, Maurice, so I can try how it lies. (*Puts the rifle in position.*) That's fine. Here's where I'll stand.

PAULINE. And I here.

RENÉ. May I stand beside you two?

LUCIEN. Sure you can.

PAULINE. Aren't you hungry, Lucien?

LUCIEN. You said something. And it may be a while before we have a chance to eat again. Bring on the food.

(*Most of them sit down. Some stand watch up on the barricade.*)

(*Doling it out*) How about a slice of sausage that I have commandeered in the name of the people? Come here, kids!

PAULINE (*drinks from the bottle*). How nice it is to be home in the streets again!

LUCIEN. Yes, it was a hell of a thing to have to lie out on the walls and stare at that stupid, gaping farm country day out and day in. I can't tell you how glad I was when Delescluze said we were to go back. Yes, it's nice here.

MARIE. And the handy thing about it here is that we're not far from home. I can easily slip off home to the boy.

MARTIN (*cuttingly*). If it keeps on like this, we'll soon be home in our own street.

LUCIEN. Oh, hold your tongue!

PAULINE. Yes, that's what I say, too!

MAURICE (*to Rose and Guy*). They won't drive us out of here, will they?

GUY AND ROSE. No!

MARTIN. Maybe you'll say something else when they start with their machine guns.

LUCIEN. Aw, go home and rock the baby.

MARTIN. It said in the paper that the generals began the war against the Germans because the machine gun had just been invented and they wanted to try it out. The Germans were too smart for them; *but now they're practicing on us*. And they've got very clever at using it these last few weeks.

LOUIS. We can use it, too, you know.

MARTIN. We've only got one!

LUCIEN. But it's as good as two. And Louis is the boy to handle it.

MAURICE. I'll bet you'd like to see how quickly I can change my cartridge belt?

GUY. Go ahead then and let me see.

MAURICE (*demonstrates*). Look at that! Done in no time.

LUCIEN. That's right, Maurice.

MAURICE. And I can shoot, too, at a pinch. (*Imitates a machine gun.*) And down they fall, the swine, one after another.

ROSE (*putting her arms around the machine gun*). Yes, you're a smart boy, Maurice!

THE CHILDREN (*sing*).

When the soldier storms against us
He is sure to meet his end.
The machine gun, the machine gun,
Is our father, brother, friend!

MAURICE. When I grow up, I'm going to be a mechanic. Then I can make machine guns myself.

MICHEL. But I thought you were going to be a coachman?

MAURICE. I'll tell you what I think, Michel. I don't believe it will be a time for that.

LOUIS (*to Martin*). You shouldn't drink so much, Martin. For now's the tug-of-war.

MARTIN (*with a laugh*). Yes, now's the tug-of-war.

LOUIS. Cut out that laughing. Get out of here if you can't shut up.

MARTIN. With this bandage I'll be shot wherever they find me. As good here as anywhere.

LOUIS. Don't you realize that it's the greatest thing in the world we're fighting for? The right to work.

GUY. So we won't have to let them fire us.

MARTIN. And the right to be killed.

LOUIS. Yes, better die than have it as we had it before. (*The shooting comes nearer. All listen.*)

LUCIEN. They're fighting down in the Place Vendôme.

LOUIS. Look to your rifles, boys. (*All go to their posts. Louis takes up his place at the machine gun. Lucien, Pauline, and René remain sitting at the right with their rifles. The children around Michel. Maurice polishes Michel's rifle.*)

LUCIEN (*listens*). Yes, it's started all right.

MICHEL. But a war like this is so expensive! They say it costs four million a day! With that money they burn houses and kill people. But just think if people knew what was good for them. If they used that money to drive out to the woods. It's so green and beautiful out there now. We used to take many a trip out there in the spring, Marthe and I. All we could manage. And then they'd go off into the bushes; and we'd stand by the roadside and wait. Often we had a good long time to wait. But that's the way with young people after all.

LUCIEN. What do you say, Pauline?

PAULINE. It doesn't sound so bad. Almost like in the cemetery.

MICHEL. But we had a good time to ourselves, too, Marthe and I. I had food and wine along, and Marthe got her fill of good oats. Then up went her tail in the air, it shone like gold,

and she took such a hearty relief. Those days will probably never come back again.

LUCIEN. You bet they will. Let's fight for Marthe, all hands.

PAULINE. We'll be irresistible when we think of Marthe.

LUCIEN. And of the trips to the woods. (*Lies over Pauline and kisses her. To René*) You should have had a girl with you too, René.

PAULINE. Perhaps you haven't got one?

RENÉ. I had. But she ran away to Versailles.

PAULINE. Oh, she was that kind.

LUCIEN. Well, then I can tell you exactly what she was like!

RENÉ. I don't know . . . We tortured each other so.

LUCIEN. Maurice, you'd better help that fellow with his rifle. (*To René*) You're a regular duffer, I must say. (*Maurice takes hold of the rifle.*)

PAULINE (*to René*). You were jealous, I suppose.

LUCIEN (*to Pauline*). Jealous? If you deceived me, I'd run a knife into you.

PAULINE. Rather the knife than anybody else.

RENÉ. It was as if it were . . . her past I was jealous of.

LUCIEN. Her past? Had you time to think of that, then? You should have been man enough to make her lose her breath, so she'd forget that and more besides. (*A grenade falls behind them.*)

PAULINE. Whew! Do you think this is any time to brood over the past? (*The children jump up to look for the grenade.*)

RENÉ. You see . . . a human being should never be allowed to be alone with his own mind. He will abuse it, torture it, twist it, if only he gets a chance at it. That's why it's good to be here. Here we are many. Here it is life and death. I fear the grenades, but there's one good thing about them: they are more important than my own mind. In that there is protection; and freedom. I am free from myself.

LUCIEN. Stop talking such rot. Go and get yourself a good lassie, old man. There are plenty of them, and they're all willing.

PAULINE. Yes, with you of course. (*Sings.*)

We lay one night by the shining rill
And the evening was so quiet.
Then first you gave me the greater thrill,
And then the minor riot.

MARTIN. Devil of a thing to sit and fool any longer with this rifle. (*Grabs the accordion and tears out of it a wild cancan. Pauline jumps up and dances, all the others beat time. The shooting becomes more violent.*)

LOUIS. Now they're attacking at the Place Vendôme.

LUCIEN. But that barricade they'll never take. It's like a mountain.

LOUIS. You'd better go home now, children.

MAURICE. Well, of all things!

LUCIEN. What the devil's the matter with you anyway, Louis?

LOUIS (*to Maurice*). You're a real man all right, that's true. But those two little ones there.

GUY. We haven't any place to go.

MARIE. You have an aunt, I know that.

GUY. Do you think we're going to sit in the house and wait for the soldiers to come and stab us with bayonets?

ROSE. Oh, no, thank you, we'll stay with Maurice. You can take your oath on that.

MARIE. Do you think the soldiers will come with their bayonets? Shall I go home to the boy? Oh, if there were only peace, Louis! Nothing else, only peace. So that the boy could grow up . . .

LOUIS. If it's the kind of peace those devils want, I'd be sorry for the boy. (*Silence. Pierre enters with his rifle over his shoulder.*)

LUCIEN. Is that you, Pierre? Where in the blue hell have you been? Have you come to fight?

PIERRE. Yes.

PAULINE. Somebody said you had run away. It was nice that you came!

PIERRE. I got so completely fed up with those officers we had out on the wall. They were bound they were going to make soldiers of us. If you asked, "What is it we are really fighting for?" they answered: "Left turn." And if you said, "What's it going to be like when we've won?" it was: "Right turn!" And that wasn't what I wanted to know.

LUCIEN. Have you got straight on what you wanted to know now, then?

PIERRE. Yes. That's why I came back again.

LUCIEN. You are a funny fellow. You're always trying to be so clever, but I haven't much use for those cogitations of yours. Why, it's as plain as day what we're fighting for. It's to get a livable life, dash it all.

PIERRE. For yourself?

LUCIEN. Of course.

PIERRE. It's not enough.

LUCIEN (*annoyed*). Oh, really? That's strange!

PIERRE. There are good chances that this livable life of yours will be to die in half an hour or be a cripple the rest of your days, lie for ten, twenty, thirty years with two stumps of legs in bed waiting for your neighbor to come home from work and help you on to the pot. It must be something else we're fighting for, something more. And now I know that it exists.

PAULINE. Tell us what it is, Pierre.

PIERRE. It's difficult to explain. They were playing something and then I understood the whole thing.

LUCIEN. Were they *playing* something? Music?

PIERRE. Yes. It was in the Imperial Palace—

LUCIEN. Sounds pretty grand.

PIERRE. It's probably Courbet, that fat painter fellow you know, who has arranged these concerts. Anybody can just walk in.

PAULINE. And then—

PIERRE. First somebody sang, and then the orchestra began. No, you have no idea what kind of an orchestra it was, far more than a hundred men. Fifty or sixty violins, and flutes, and trumpets, and harps. And how they played! And that's when it was that I understood everything. Words I had not understood before got meaning: freedom and humanity. . . . It's something great, that's worth everything. Perhaps *you* won't live to see, but it's there. And then it was no longer difficult to die, for there would always be something left. And then I felt happy that there were so many of us listening, there were thousands of us, and everybody knew the same thing that I knew, I could see it in their faces. For we must be many, but then we shall succeed. And some day people will *live* what we only *listened to* yesterday.

PAULINE. What music was it?

PIERRE (*humming the concluding chorus of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony*). They say it was written by a German. I think it was something with *von*.

LUCIEN. Bismarck, maybe? I have realized this thing all along. It's us. Against the others. It's as simple as it can be.

LOUIS. Now the shooting has stopped! Versailles has been thrown back, boys, you can bet your last dollar on that.

MANY. Hurrah!

MARIE. May it not mean . . . ? Are you sure, Louis?

LOUIS. Yes, listen! What else would it mean? Yes, by Jove! (*Martin, who is now very drunk, laughs scornfully. Trumpet signal, hoof-beats.*)

MAURICE (*up on the barricade*). There's Delescluze! He's coming in a carriage. (*All jump up.*)

PAULINE. How ill he looks!

LUCIEN. But he's smiling! (*Delescluze comes stumbling in, leaning on a cane.*)

ALL. Long live Delescluze!

LOUIS. A stone, Citizen Delescluze!

ALL. A stone! A stone! A stone!

DELESCLUZE (*smilingly lays a stone on the barricade*). That looks fine.

LOUIS. What's the situation?

DELESCLUZE. Better than ever.

LOUIS. And down on the Place Vendôme?

DELESCLUZE. You can be quite calm.

LOUIS (*happily to Marie*). There now, you see!

DELESCLUZE. With our own cobblestones under our feet and in front of us, we are invincible. Our own streets that we love and are at home in—they too have risen, they have become barricades and are fighting together with us. From the men on a thousand barricades I bring you greetings, comrades. They are happy, as I am, because the fight has become so simple, so clear. Now it is only to stand firm, now it's the easiest thing in the world: to win or die.

MAURICE (*has caught a leaflet that was floating down through the air*). Here's a leaflet from Versailles!

LUCIEN. It must have come with the wind from that house over there.

LOUIS. All the shutters are closed.

LUCIEN. Those swine will be heard from all right, when their Versailles friends advance.

DELESCLUZE (*has sat down, reads*). "Countrymen. The hour of liberation is near. The guilty shall be punished without mercy. Thiers, President of France." That's how it has to be. We must have no alternative but victory.

MAURICE. Look, Delescluze! On this leaflet are exactly the same words as on the posters of the Commune. "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," it says here, too. Isn't that strange?

DELESCLUZE. No, my boy, it's not strange in the least. What men have once bled for and despaired of—even that becomes something for the greediest and emptiest to steal. In their world everything—sooner or later—turns into property. These beautiful words, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," were once conquered for mankind in the battles and sufferings of the Great

Revolution. That Revolution M. Thiers loves, he has written a bulky work about it and earned many thousand francs per volume. But *our* revolution is to him just progress, not property; therefore he sends soldiers against us. You see, either you can earn money on the truth and betray it, and then you'll sit in Versailles; or you can carry the truth further, and then you end up here. Yes, then you end up here. Once upon a time I thought that the truth could fight its way forward in another way; but that was wrong. It ends here.

MARIE. Isn't there any other way, Citizen Delescluze?

LUCIEN. In hell rather!

DELESCLUZE. I remember many an evening on Devil's Island, the trade wind blew in from the sea, the Southern Cross shone. How one longs for home, how one loves, when one is far away! Sometimes I used to think: How the stars must love the earth, they have such a long way to yearn. On those evenings I believed in the impossible. I thought if I could only get home and tell what I knew, everything would be all right. For at home the earth was so good, and the sun, and the people's smiles; I thought that for everybody, almost everybody, justice and brotherhood would be like an emancipation. I came home and wrote about it. Prison. I wrote again. Prison once more. Now I know. There are only two powers in the world. The prison guards and the prisoners. It's between them the battle must be.

PIERRE. That's true.

DELESCLUZE. The prison guards are the world's mighty, the hangmen from Versailles, and their helpers, who are still more frightful, the indifferent. And the prisoners? They are all the millions in the world who are locked up in hunger and degradation. Now and then they are let out from the factories and their work to be taken over into a new prison—war. But it is more than that, it is *mankind* itself, its dignity and greatness, that is fettered fast. From when we are little, our minds are filled with the idea of the paltriness of human nature; greed

is proclaimed as the noblest quality; and slowly the prison walls grow up around the man. And far, far away from here justice has been incarcerated; its prison is called heaven, and thousands of black-frocked prison guards see to it that justice does not escape. Yes, God himself is in jail. But on the day we free ourselves, we shall free God, too; and then justice, then God will walk free and happy round about the earth! I am old and sick now. The prison guards have nearly finished me. They have turned my body itself into a prison, I am locked in by tropical diseases; I am looking out now through a grill of fever; ah, but I see you and the warm May sun. (*Gets up suddenly.*) Victory, people, victory! When I came out of prison—and I have been in jail and exile twenty years of my life—people used to say to me: "You are a martyr for freedom, Delescluze." But every time they praised me, I felt nausea and shame. Men should not be martyrs. Men must be victors. Therefore I always hated prison, because prison was defeat. But this time those who are guilty of justice shall for once not be punished. A new age shall begin. Mankind shall no longer be *used*. It shall live.

LOUIS (*listens to the shooting*). Be quiet.

MARIE. Now they are at it again.

LOUIS. That's no attack, that down there. The shots come so regularly! It sounds—as if they were shooting prisoners. (*A shot, Michel keels over.*)

DELESCLUZE. That was a sniper from that building over there. *Take cover!*

LUCIEN (*looking at Michel*). He's dead.

MAURICE (*bent over the dead man*). That's what happens when I don't look after things. (*Louis lets the machine gun play in that direction.*)

DELESCLUZE. We must set fire to that house! The Versailles troops may establish themselves there.

MAURICE. That's exactly the job for me. I'll burn the house to the ground.

ROSE. What shall we do when you go, Maurice?

DELESCLUZE. No, boy! It's death to go out from the barricade now.

LUCIEN. It will take two for that job. Pauline and I will climb over the roofs. You can have my rifle, Maurice. And here are the cartridges. Isn't that fine?

MAURICE. Yes.

RENÉ. Come back soon.

LUCIEN. Sure.

RENÉ (*to Pauline*). Aren't you afraid?

PAULINE. No. Are we, Lucien?

LUCIEN. We certainly are not.

PAULINE. Because we are two for the job. And we have agreed that if the one of us dies, the other will follow close behind.

LUCIEN. Yes, that you can be sure of.

PAULINE. So long, Pierre! So long, Maurice! (*They slip out from the barricade. A group of National Guardsmen come in, some are wounded.*)

A NATIONAL GUARDSMAN. The barricade on the Place Vendôme has fallen! They had machine guns on the roofs. No human being could resist them.

MARTIN (*roars out, dead drunk and sinister*).

The machine gun, the machine gun,
Is our father, brother, friend.

(*Louis pulls him so that he falls down.*)

GUARDSMAN. They're shooting all they get hold of—women and children, too.

DELESCLUZE. But this barricade they shall not take.

LOUIS. No.

DELESCLUZE. Get ready for them! (*Gabrielle Langevin enters at the head of a flock of women and tries to go along the passage leading out to the street in front of the barricade.*)
Back, people! The Versailles troops are coming.

GABRIELLE. That's where we're going.

DELESCLUZE. Are you out of your mind? It's certain death.

GABRIELLE. We have to go.

DELESCLUZE. I know what you want to do! But there's no use fraternizing with the soldiers. They may perhaps turn the butt ends of their rifles up and pretend they're not going to shoot, but all the time they will be coming nearer and when they've got quite close, they'll shoot. We know that better than you.

GABRIELLE. That's not what we mean to do.

DELESCLUZE. What *do* you mean to do then?

GABRIELLE. To go between you. There are a few of us women, perhaps a hundred, who have decided to do this. (*Turns to the women.*) Come, my friends, let's go now. All we have to do is walk quietly, always forward, forward, till our task is done.

DELESCLUZE. Stop them! They are insane.

GABRIELLE. Citizen Delescluze, what have you to give the people? A demand that they defend themselves to the last man. You will turn the city into a sea of blood. We want to save it. Nobody can stop us. Can they?

THE WOMEN. No.

LOUIS. Shoot her.

GABRIELLE. Whether you shoot us or they shoot us makes no difference to us. We only want one thing: *to stop the war.*

DELESCLUZE. Peace with the hangmen! It's rank subjection. Don't you realize that?

GABRIELLE. If we believed that every man among the Versailles soldiers was a hangman, you would be right. But we believe that they are nearly all misled and desperate people. I have a brother among them.

LOUIS. A brother among the Versailles troops! Shoot and be damned to her!

MAURICE. Leave her alone!

GABRIELLE (*to Delescluze*). Do you think every opponent is an enemy? Then you have a miserable faith in mankind. I

know that a soldier is a human being who is no longer allowed to think. He is imprisoned as you have been. And we don't want to kill the prisoners, we want to free them. For every man that you or the others shoot, there will be fresh revenge. But if we are killed, we are not to be avenged! We have only one request: do not avenge us! Look at us when we are dead and say, "Who killed these women? Perhaps I, perhaps my enemy." And say, "They wanted to die, because vengeance must be stopped. They died so that two enemies might be able to look each other in the eye for the first time without hatred and revenge. And this glance from enemy to enemy is the beginning of peace."

MARIE (*in a shout*). I'm going with you.

LOUIS. No!

MARIE. It's right what she says. You are trying to stop the enemy by dying. So is she. I think her way is surer. I believe I can save our boy, Louis. And you, too.

DELESCLUZE. It's defeat you believe in! You will give the Versailles troops new courage, new cruelty. They will not see sacrifice in this, merely desperation.

LOUIS (*seizing a rifle and aiming at Gabrielle*). Cursed bourgeois Judas. (*Maurice knocks the gun so that the shot goes into the air.*)

GABRIELLE. Don't hate us because we try. Now we're going.

MARIE. Yes. (*A grenade falls on the barricade. Louis and others fall.*)

MARIE (*runs up to him*). Louis! They have killed my husband. Louis, it's me, try to look at me. Those devils have killed my husband. And should we make peace with them? I'll take your place, Louis. I'll run the machine gun for you. (*The Marseillaise begins.*)

DELESCLUZE. Look around you! Look at the wounded. Our own are in a bad way. Isn't it better to help them? (*Some of the women hurry over to the wounded; others seize the rifles*

from the fallen. Gabrielle is left standing alone.) Look, the house is burning! They have done it.

MAURICE. Lucien and Pauline have done it!

GUY AND ROSE. Hurrah!

DELESCLUZE. There they come. (*Marie shoots with the machine gun.*) That's right. Let them get acquainted with the machine gun. Wait with the rifles till they come closer. Don't shoot till you can see the whites of their eyes.

PIERRE (*to Gabrielle*). I know you meant well. But the world has now come to such a pass that kindness is the same as treachery. (*He runs up on the barricade. The battle begins.*)

ACT IV

SCENE I

A room in Thiers' headquarters.

The President is addressing a group of officers, resplendent in gold and decorations.

THIERS. Gentlemen, I assume that you share my dismay at the shameful interpellation in the National Assembly yesterday evening. They actually dared to ask if it were true that I intended to open the gates of Paris for a week to let the leaders of the Commune escape and thus bring about a peaceful solution. I assume that you already know my answer, the product of an annihilating contempt. In the same spirit I have answered the bandits from Paris when they wanted me to release men that we have in prison. They offered me all their own hostages in exchange—among them the Archbishop of Paris, whom they have been threatening to execute. (*The officers and Thiers cross themselves.*) My answer was a categorical No. We shall not make them a single concession. And if they shoot the Archbishop, well and good; it will stir up feeling still further against them. To show the slightest weakness would be treachery against the Fatherland, and, gentlemen, against the army. I have succeeded in organizing one of the finest armies France has ever seen; I am determined that its victory shall be a memorable one. The day may come when we shall have our next war with the Germans, and then it may be of importance for the army that its last memory is not a defeat but a glorious victory.

GENERAL GALLIFFET. Mr. President, it is fortunate for the army that its Commander-in-Chief should have such breadth of vision. Personally I thought it would take a colonial war to strengthen the morale of the troops. I know from Morocco and China that that is the right kind of war. To fight against natives creates a magnificent spirit in an army.

THIERS. My dear General, do not insult the natives by comparing them to the bandits of Paris. No! I do not need to send my army across the sea to give them that precious thing: assurance of victory. But I can tell you this, gentlemen, what is happening in Paris now has a deeper, more promising perspective than most people surmise.

During my inspection tours at the front I have followed with very particular interest the work of the machine-gun divisions. Do you realize what this weapon will mean for the established order? At one time the revolutionary's ideas may perhaps have corresponded to some extent with his weapons; he could be a dangerous man with his rifle on the barricade. Today a rifle is a pathetic object, and it is all the poor man can afford. A machine gun is a very costly weapon; hence, ours. The boldness or enthusiasm of the other side is no longer of any use; they can be mowed down, a hundred men a minute, by a single soldier, sensibly equipped by us. Against the confused aspirations of the masses the machine gun speaks a language it behooves them to heed, namely, order and precision.

I see this as a turning point in history; we know for the first time how the masses can be kept down. There is a profound justice in this: at the moment when property is threatened, it produces a technique of war marked by its own peculiar character, a means of destruction which by its price is inaccessible to the masses. Let the mob tear up cobblestones and go up on the barricades and fire off their rifles. They have lost. Let them rise up now and in the future; they have lost once and for all. It is our duty, it is an act of mercy, both to the rebels and their successors, to imprint this truth upon their minds. Are the bandits beginning to understand it?

GALLIFFET. They seem almost indifferent when they are shot.

THIERS. Yes. They would rather die than work and live.

GALLIFFET. It is regrettable that there are not only men among them, but also women and children. Their participation

in the rebellion is an insult to the army to which I have the honor to belong.

THIERS. Children. I have been called hardhearted when I have stood out for child labor in factories. Who was right? Who knew human nature? Now the whole world must perceive what I have always maintained, that the moment children lose the safe protection which work—together with religion—affords them, they become depraved.

GALLIFFET. Mr. President, the army has a request to make of you! Let us storm the last sections of the city today and crush the rebellion completely.

THIERS. No. That's not how I want it done. Here is my plan. The army is to advance in four divisions, very slowly and very thoroughly. Every street is to be . . . made peaceful before you advance farther.

GALLIFFET. It can't be denied that this peace-making has a somewhat enervating effect on the young and inexperienced among the soldiers.

THIERS (*angrily*). General, I assumed that you had the discipline completely in hand?

GALLIFFET. Of course. If the soldiers become nervous when they are to shoot the prisoners, I usually have the shirts taken off the bandits and a white ring drawn with chalk around the left nipple. Then the soldiers feel more at home, it's like a target, and their hands become steady again. But I can't help being aware that a violent assault would be more merciful.

THIERS. But I am highly aware that it would be less effective. I don't want anyone to escape and attack the troops in the rear. All my studies confirm me in this view.

GALLIFFET. You are right, as always, Mr. President. (*General assent.*)

THIERS (*delighted*). I have, I venture to say, mastered several domains of life. It would please me to think that I had not shown myself incompetent in this one either. And may I add, it has been a greater satisfaction to me to lead a campaign than

to write ten books. Gentlemen—France and I salute you. (*The officers salute and go.*)

THE MINISTER (*hurrying in*). I bring news that will be painful to you personally.

THIERS. I have no sorrows but those of France.

THE MINISTER. The Commune have carried out their shameful threat. Your house in Paris has been torn down.

THIERS. Oh, they will suffer for that. (*In the doorway*) Elise, you must take this calmly. The barbarians have destroyed our house. (*Mme. Thiers enters.*) Our salons, Elise, where the might and beauty of France assembled, are no more. My art treasures—

THE MINISTER. They have been taken care of. Courbet has had your collections put in storage.

THIERS. There, you see! Even that scoundrel who tore down the honor of France, the Vendôme column, had to bow before my taste.

THE MINISTER (*with a newspaper in his hand*). Unfortunately, he writes . . .

THIERS (*seizing the paper*). That he should dare! That he should dare! (*To the Minister*) Tell my adjutant I am going to the front. Have the white mare brought out. (*The Minister goes. Thiers rings. The servant enters.*) My spurs! (*The servant goes out.*)

MME. THIERS. What did Courbet write?

THIERS. He says my collections are the most frightful junk. He is pleased to jest, the good Mr. Courbet. It may be that he will come to understand—some form of seriousness or other. It amuses him to make fun of my copies and plaster casts of the world masters. He doubtless prefers his own beastly daubs.

MME. THIERS. Well, there's something to his pictures.

THIERS. Do you think the moment is well chosen? (*The servant enters again. Thiers sits down and the servant puts on his spurs.*) My copies—they represent the culture that is recognized and respected by all. A thousand times rather a copy of a

classic, I say, than a newfangled original. The centuries have tested my works; there is the accumulation of the sober appraisal of generations in every single one of them. Now they are our intellectual property. They are a part of our heritage, our bulwark, our authority.

MME. THIERS. What is new today—is perhaps the heritage of the future.

THIERS. That's just it—perhaps. Remember this, my dear Elise, the only thing we cannot possess is the future. To believe in "the future" is a deviation from the exact, the established. (*The servant has now finished and goes. Thiers gets up and tramps round to try the boots.*) What joy do I get out of it if some speculation of mine in the future should turn out to be successful in a hundred years?

MME. THIERS. If something good should come forth in a hundred years, would that be too late then?

THIERS. I venture to think so, yes. Altogether too late for me.

MME. THIERS. Perhaps you would look at it differently if you were not childless.

THIERS. So it is *I* who am childless! Perhaps you think it's my fault?

MME. THIERS. I do.

THIERS. That's splendid. Absolutely splendid. Haven't you had lovers, and did you have any children by them? (*Walks a few steps across the room, clears his throat.*) You needn't say anything. I believe you. You have not done what I accused you of. That would have been too much! But what if I can prove that I have several illegitimate children? Don't contradict me. This conversation is ended.

MME. THIERS. Oh, no. Your sterility goes to the very root of your being. You love yourself so deeply that you can't believe that *anybody* shall live after you are dead. That is your childlessness.

THIERS. What lies at the bottom of this irritating conversation is this: that you are actually defending those bandits in my

own house. No! Not in my own house, but in the place where we have taken refuge while they are leveling our own house to the ground.

MME. THIERS. I don't know them. But sometimes I think there must be some good in them—something that desires warmth and life.

THIERS. And may I ask why?

MME. THIERS. Because they hate you. (*Thiers brays scornfully, takes his riding whip from the table, and goes out. We hear the cry: "Present arms!" Trumpet signals continue in military music to the next scene.*)

SCENE 2

The same setting as for the opening of Act I. The houses have been shot to pieces. A few bodies lie in the street. Rigault comes up the stairs at the left, but is halted by the Captain of the National Guard, who comes up the stairs at the right.

THE CAPTAIN. Citizen Rigault, in ten minutes the Versailles troops will have surrounded the prison. What am I to do with the prisoners? Shall I shoot them?

RIGAULT. Bring them up here. They can make themselves useful for a little while yet. The Versailles troops may perhaps stop this senseless murdering when they know that the Archbishop and other favorites of theirs are up here. (*The Captain hurries down again. Rigault goes out at the left. A number of Communards, bloody and blackened from powder smoke, come fleeing up both stairways. Among them are Delescluze, Pierre, who is wounded in the shoulder, and Gabrielle Langevin.*)

PIERRE. Shall we throw up a barricade here, Citizen Delescluze?

DELESCLUZE. We are surrounded. They can attack us in the rear.

PIERRE. Then we'll entrench ourselves in the cemetery. (*To Gabrielle*) Don't come with us. Hide yourself.

GABRIELLE. What's become of the children? I must find the children. (*All hurry up the center stairs. Delescluze walks slowly and painfully; stops a moment and rests.*)

COURBET (*entering from the right*). They're coming, they're killing people right and left. What shall I do, Delescluze? Help me, you who are strong and wise, Delescluze.

DELESCLUZE. My friend, I am afraid that no one can help you. Your name stands at the top of the list of those whom the officers hate, because you tore down the Vendôme column.

COURBET. I didn't want to tear it down. "Screw it off," I said. I meant, move it to another place. Besides, I shall take my full responsibility to posterity.

DELESCLUZE. Understand that you must take it now.

COURBET. Take responsibility for what? For blood and fire and corpses? I had a dream of justice, and you people have carried it out stupidly. Look at this picture of Paris today, and look at my own canvases, and then answer me: Is this picture by me, can I be responsible for it, can I sign it, G. Courbet? Never, I say.

DELESCLUZE. That can also be expressed more simply. You intend to go back on yourself?

COURBET. Go back on myself? When I reject one of my paintings, when I paint out what is not a true expression of my personality, do I call that treachery?

VARLIN (*enters*). Are you here, Citizen Courbet? Are you alive? That's strange.

COURBET (*angrily*). It's not strange at all. What do you mean, man?

VARLIN. I heard some shouts from the place where the Versailles troops are shooting the prisoners. "Death to Courbet," they yelled. And I saw a man who resembled you put up against the wall. I thought it was you who fell. They have shot the wrong man.

COURBET. This is my chance! They've shot somebody else. Now they'll no longer look for me. I could die all right, but not

like that, not in a mass grave. I'm saved. Congratulate me, friends. The wrong man! Just like that ignorant mob! They ought to know that there is only one Courbet.

DELESCLUZE. I'm afraid you're right; there is only one Courbet, and the soldiers will find the right one.

VARLIN. I too fear that he has died in vain—the poor unfortunate over whose death you are rejoicing.

COURBET. No. I refuse to believe you. They won't look any longer for me. He has died for humanity.

DELESCLUZE. There's only one thing that may perhaps save you.

COURBET. What? Tell me what!

DELESCLUZE. That you're not taken seriously.

COURBET. I can get witnesses to that! Nobody takes me seriously. "That braggart Courbet," they say, "he's fat and comical, *he* can't stand on any barricade."

DELESCLUZE. Doesn't self-respect mean anything?

COURBET (*stumbling over a corpse*). What do cadavers know of self-respect? But I have pictures inside me that demand to be painted, that's my self-respect. I'm the only one who can paint them! And I want to save those pictures for the world. (*Hurries over and takes hold of Delescluze.*) Man, I want to live! I want to see Ornans once more. I want to throw myself down on the ground, I want to take the lumps of soil in my hands, kiss them and bless them.

DELESCLUZE. Here is my hand, Courbet.

COURBET (*embraces him*). Good-bye, my friend. (*Hurries away.*)

DELESCLUZE (*looking after him*). It's easy to say that a man like that is cowardly. Is he? Are there really any cowardly people? Cowardice—what is it but to look at an action in front of you and doubt the compelling necessity of carrying it out? *He* doubted, he had to. (*Smiles.*) Even his fantastic boasting—was it anything but a necessary self-assertion in an age which might crush him by its want of understanding? Good luck to

you, Courbet! Varlin, my friend, you are young, you are noble, life has use for you. You must not perish in this slaughter. Try to get away.

VARLIN. And you yourself, Delescluze?

DELESCLUZE. It's different with me. I am in command, I must share the fate of my soldiers. (*Guy and Rose enter.*)

GUY. Where are the others? Do you know what happened to Maurice?

DELESCLUZE. No, my child.

ROSE. Maurice is dead! What shall we do? Maurice is dead.

DELESCLUZE. Children, try to hide yourselves.

GUY. No, we want to go to the others. (*They run up the center stairs.*)

DELESCLUZE (*looking after them*). If we must die, Varlin, we have a faith: Our fight has not been in vain for those who come after us.

VARLIN. The children there will be killed.

DELESCLUZE. Even if every child, every single child, were killed, I would still have faith in the future. And now good-bye. I must hold out a little while longer. (*He presses Varlin's hand and walks slowly and painfully up the stairs.*)

RIGAULT (*enters from the left*). Why aren't you wearing your red sash, Varlin? I don't usually wear mine for everyday, but for a holiday like this, I put it on. Perhaps you're thinking of running away like your friend Beslay.

VARLIN. Where is Beslay?

RIGAULT. On his way to the Swiss border.

VARLIN. That's good. He didn't belong here.

RIGAULT. He was saved by the Governor of the Bank of France. Those two were inseparable. I'm not so sure that Beslay didn't belong just here—against the wall over there. I would gladly shoot him with my own hand.

VARLIN. Beslay was the best man I ever knew.

RIGAULT. But goodness is a crime! (*The Archbishop, three other clerics, and two prisoners in civilian clothes come up the*

stairs at the left under escort. A menacing crowd surrounds the prisoners. Varlin sits down dead tired with his head in his hands at one of the shot-riddled tables in front of the café. Rigault looks at the prisoners for a while as they pass by, then goes into the café, which is in ruins. At the same time Lucien, Pauline, and René come dashing up the stairs on the right.)

LUCIEN (*in deadly anxiety*). Pauline, I have no more bullets. I've been mad, I've shot in frenzy. Two bullets, good God! (*He throws himself over the bodies and investigates them; to René*) Have you any bullets? You dog, hand over those bullets! I'll shoot when they take us, they won't get a chance to haul us over to the wall. Jesus Christ, isn't it possible to find two bullets?

PAULINE. We're together, Lucien.

LUCIEN. Yes, but they're not going to slaughter us.

PAULINE. We must run away to the cemetery. I think they're surrounding us now. We must be with our own.

LUCIEN. I'm afraid to die like that. I don't want to stand up there and wait without bullets for them to come. *I don't want to die.*

PAULINE. Don't you remember our cemetery?

LUCIEN (*goes over to her*). Let me be with you, Pauline.

PAULINE. Of course you shall be with me, dear. We'll find a nice place, don't worry. I shall comfort you, my own.

RENÉ. Where are you going? Don't leave me.

LUCIEN. We don't want you with us.

RENÉ. Please.

LUCIEN. To hell with you! (*Pushes him aside, hurries up the stairs with Pauline. Rigault has come out with a bottle of cognac, stands with his back to the audience following the transfer of prisoners with his eyes. Then he turns round.*)

RENÉ. Rigault, it's good you came. I'm so lonely.

RIGAULT (*pouring himself a glass*). Won't the people have anything to do with you?

RENÉ. Everybody has left me.

RIGAULT. You sponged on the people because you couldn't bear your own company. You wanted the crowd to protect you against yourself. Now there is no longer any crowd. Now you must pay the reckoning. What have you left to pay with? Who are you? (*Drinks.*)

RENÉ. Teach me to die, Rigault!

RIGAULT. Despise something. Scrape together what passion you have and despise something. That may help. (*Is about to leave on the left.*)

RENÉ (*goes over to him*). Where are you going?

RIGAULT. Don't cling to me like that, damn it. I'm no Sylvie.

RENÉ. How arrogant I've been, Rigault! I've been harsh to her. I have let a living human being go away from me! Perhaps I need not have been alone now. If I were allowed to live, I should be humble toward life. I should take care of it. (*A shot resounds. René falls, shot through the chest.*)

RIGAULT. Oho! The Versailles crowd are getting courageous now. (*Shouts up at one of the houses.*) But it's a little too soon, and we'll put a stop to that. (*With a leap up to the left*) Shoot the prisoners! (*The Communards, fleeing, dash up the stairs to the right and out to where the prisoners are.*)

THE COMMUNARDS. Yes! Kill them! Show Versailles that we can pay them back. Then they won't have to denounce us! Avenge our dead!

VARLIN (*trying to stop them*). No. This is murder!

RIGAULT (*flinging him aside*). Off with you! You've put yourself in my way before. Ten thousand lives might have been saved if I had been allowed to paralyze Versailles with terror. Look what your love of mankind has led to, you driveling hangman! (*Yells.*) Shoot them down to the last man! (*The shots resound outside.*)

VARLIN. What a war!

RIGAULT. There fell the Archbishop! If I haven't done another good act in the world, at least I have done this. I have shown that we can liquidate an archbishop just as unconcernedly

as Versailles kills a worker. People have one less superstition to carry.

VARLIN. You will bring down on us a revenge twice as cruel.

RIGAULT. On the contrary. It will restrain those murderers from Versailles when they see that at last we're beginning to retaliate on the hostages.

VARLIN. And *you* dare to talk about murder?

RIGAULT. Yes. I dare to use my intelligence. I reserve the right to distinguish between purposeful extermination and stupid.

THE COMMUNARDS (*from the left*). Now they can't do any more harm! Long live the Commune! (*They go up the center stairs.*)

VARLIN. You're ruined yourself anyway. But think of those you have egged on to kill defenseless people. Is this the last picture they're to have before their eyes when they're put up against the wall?

RIGAULT. Have they anything to lose by that? They know the world was nothing but blood. It won't be any loss to leave it. What more can one ask? Here they come. (*Scornfully*) Run, Citizen Varlin, run!

VARLIN. I have no longer anything to run to. And I have deserved to die.

RIGAULT. Are you repenting on your deathbed? Are you betraying the Commune? Is that what you're aiming at?

VARLIN. No. I am just as guilty as you in the terror. It is my own life that reproaches me, all the dead, inactive hours in it. It is all the things I did not get done that have doomed me. It is just. (*The Versailles soldiers storm the stairs: behind them follow inflamed civilians, among them a dazzlingly elegant young woman, Sylvie Gérard.*)

THE LIEUTENANT. That's Rigault!

RIGAULT. Yes, I am Rigault.

A CATHOLIC PRIEST. There's Varlin, member of the Commune.

THE LIEUTENANT. Are you Varlin?

VARLIN. Yes. (*The crowd wants to lynch the two prisoners.*)

THE LIEUTENANT. Get that mob out of the way. (*To the soldiers*) Shoot them. (*René, who lies wounded by the wall, has half arisen and looks round in wild alarm. Rigault and Varlin stand up against the wall. The soldiers take aim.*)

RIGAULT. Down with the murderers!

VARLIN. Long live the Commune! (*The soldiers shoot, Rigault falls.*)

VARLIN (*has just sunk down on his knees*). Long live the Commune. (*He dies.*)

SYLVIE GÉRARD (*clinging to the Lieutenant in a wild, sadistic intoxication*). How wonderful you are! Oh, my love, that was simply marvelous.

RENÉ (*sees her*). Sylvie! Help me, Sylvie! Have you come to me, Sylvie?

THE LIEUTENANT. Mlle. Gérard, there's one of the rebels who apparently knows you.

SYLVIE. I know none of them. None! (*The Lieutenant draws his revolver and shoots René through the head.*) Kill these monsters! They want to take everything from us, religion and happiness, kill them! Do you think I'm pretty? Haven't I a right to have more beauty around me than other people? These devils wanted us all to be equal. First poor and then old. That was the life they were offering us. Darling—let me be with you when you shoot them! It's so good when they groan and die, that's how they wanted us to groan and gasp with pleasure beneath them, and they had nothing to give us in return. Revenge us, my dear. I love you.

THE LIEUTENANT. Soldiers! Be careful. Don't touch their food. They've poisoned it. Don't go into the houses. They'll blow them up.

A SOLDIER (*comes in from the left*). The Archbishop has been murdered. (*All cross themselves.*)

THE CROWD. Kill them!

THE LIEUTENANT. Before we go on, we must mop up. We don't want these devils at our backs.

BRIGEAU (*pointing to a man*). He helped kill the hostages! (*Pointing to the First Woman*) And she was always with the Communards.

FIRST WOMAN. I'm innocent!

BRIGEAU (*pointing to another man*). And he!

FIRST WOMAN. I hate the Commune. As God is my witness. But that man must be punished. Don't spare them! (*Galliffet comes up the stairs and bows low to Sylvie.*)

THE LIEUTENANT. The Archbishop has been killed.

GALLIFFET. Line the mob up in a row. Show your hands. I want to see if there's powder black on them. (*Sylvie Gérard accompanies him with laughing, inciting admiration down the row.*)

GALLIFFET (*pointing at the First Woman*). Take her away.

FIRST WOMAN. No. I have two small children. I'm innocent.

GALLIFFET. Madam, I have visited all the theaters in Paris, and I'm very familiar with this act. (*She is led away.*)

SYLVIE. You are a benefactor, General. You are rooting out poverty.

GALLIFFET (*stops in front of a small, very ugly man*). What an incredibly hideous face! Take him away. (*Points with his riding whip at a white-haired man.*) Away.

(*Man is led away.*)

THE WHITE-HAIRED MAN. I wasn't in it. I'm over sixty, nobody over sixty was called into the army by the Commune.

GALLIFFET. Correct. All over sixty, step forward. (*Five or six step forward hopefully.*)

GALLIFFET. Take them away. They didn't have to take part in the rebellion; yet they did so. They shall be shot first of all. (*A shot from a window at Galliffet.*)

THE LIEUTENANT. General, he shot you through the cap!

(*To the sergeant*) A sniper in that window yonder. Take five men and shoot him.

GALLIFFET (*stopping them*). He shall not be shot. I have always encouraged marksmanship and that man wasn't bad.

SYLVIE AND THE SOLDIERS. Long live Galliffet!

GALLIFFET. Soldiers! All we have to do now is take the cemetery, then we've reached our goal: order, peace, and civilization have triumphed. Forward!

SCENE 3

The cemetery, close by the wall. In a ditch behind some graves lie Pauline and Lucien. Gabrielle is binding Pierre's shoulder. Guy and Rose sit huddled in fear. A few wounded and dead. A man lies behind a grave on the right with his gun in position to fire. Shooting far off. The stage presents an overpowering picture of the green lushness of spring.

PAULINE. How goes it with you, Pierre?

PIERRE. Oh, I'll be all right. (*Silence.*)

PIERRE (*to Gabrielle*). Now listen. You mustn't stay here. Try to get away. Better use your handkerchief to wave with. Walk straight toward them. Perhaps you won't be shot.

GABRIELLE. I belong here.

PIERRE. No, you don't.

GABRIELLE. Yes, I do. I always have. And now it's so easy. For now it's only the others who are killing. But you children—do try once more! Take Rose by the hand, Guy, and run across. Perhaps they won't harm you.

ROSE. No. They shot so horribly when we tried before.

GUY. We don't want to be alone.

PAULINE. Just you stay right here, children.

GUY. What do you think has become of Maurice?

PIERRE. Oh, he'll turn up all right.

PAULINE. Heavens, yes, Maurice always knows how to take care of himself.

GUY. We were never afraid when Maurice was here.

ROSE. And he could read the letters on the crosses for us.

GABRIELLE. Can't I do that for you?

GUY. No, it's different somehow when Maurice does it.
(*They crawl back to their places.*)

PAULINE (*to Lucien*). It's getting to be a long time between shots now. Soon our boys won't have any more ammunition left, I suppose.

LUCIEN. Just let the filthy scoundrels come. I'm so comfortable here with you, Pauline. It's so nice to lie here with my head in your lap and look up over your breasts. They've got much bigger the last month, you know. They fairly bristle against the sun. Are you comfortable?

PAULINE. Yes.

LUCIEN. But I'm still more comfortable. Are you jealous?

PAULINE. No.

LUCIEN. Well, maybe you're the most comfortable then?

PAULINE. Of course.

LUCIEN. That's fine.

PAULINE. Did you like it?

LUCIEN. Yes. Do you know what I believe? That this with you and me, that's so good, was invented to tell us what death is like. Everything becomes so still inside you that you haven't a single wish left; that's what I think it's like to die. (*Shooting, a few bullets hit the wall.*) What kind of manners is that! Can't they come a little closer and shoot properly? This only makes you nervous.

GUY. It's Maurice! (*Maurice comes forward at a bound and ducks down behind the grave.*)

ROSE. Maurice! (*Cry of joy from all*)

MAURICE. I thought I damn well wasn't going to find you. It's so horrid to be alone.

ROSE. Yes, isn't it!

MAURICE. But then somebody said you were over beside the wall. And was I glad! But they pretty nearly got me, boy.

ROSE. Are they coming to kill us now?

MAURICE. What difference does that make? They're killing everything they come across, bag and baggage; it would only be unpleasant to be left. What would you do in the street when all the boys are gone and there's nobody to play with?

ROSE. But doesn't it hurt?

MAURICE. Not if you stand still and let them take a good aim at you.

ROSE. I'm afraid. I'm afraid.

MAURICE. Now what kind of a way is that to act? Is that the thanks we get for letting you come with Guy and me? You must remember it isn't every girl we'd have taken with us. You'd better think of that, by Jove.

GUY (*pointing to a cross*). Look, Maurice, read the letters for us.

MAURICE (*to Rose*). If you'd like me to, I'll do it.

ROSE. Oh, please.

MAURICE. Here it says "Josef Andrée," backwards "Eérдна Fesoj," born 1862, died 1870, just eight years old, no older than you! And now Josef's better off than many of our boys out in the middle of the street. He has flowers and grass over him. But we'll have that, too, if we lie here. All we need is a spade full of dirt. And won't Josef be surprised when he gets the whole gang down with him! (*The children laugh.*)

MAURICE. Oh, look at the ants, boy. What are those little white things they're dragging round.

GABRIELLE. That's their eggs.

MAURICE. What are they going to do with them then?

GABRIELLE. They keep moving them all the time so the sun can come all round the egg.

MAURICE. Did you ever see the like of such smart little devils! And look at the spider on that cross over there. It spun a long thin thread and dropped down on it. Now it's letting the wind carry it over to that twig there, now it makes it fast. Now it has the frame ready. . . .

GABRIELLE (*bending over the bandages*). Is it better now?

PIERRE. Yes, much better. Now I feel quite smart and trim—all ready to be shot. Give yourself up now, please. God bless you, in five minutes everything will be over.

GABRIELLE. Everything, my friend, is in vain, if we look at it with the eyes of death. The child a woman bears is doomed to become a skeleton. The flowers must wither, nothing is more certain. But we may also choose the flower and the child as the only thing; and then everything is life. It all depends on our will. Yes, we can look at the grass and the sky and the sun in such a way that we are immortal. (*The man who was lying with the gun gets up with a groan and falls again.*)

ROSE. Is he dead?

MAURICE. One would think you had never seen a man die before! Yes, dead as a doornail. But just look here at this. That I swear is the prettiest thing I've ever seen. (*Low, dismal music begins. As though driven back by it, Delescluze and others come in, retreating. The music stops.*)

DELESCLUZE. This is the end. They're waiting for General Galliffet. Then they'll advance. So endeth the Commune. More than anyone else I have been responsible for the terror and death. Do you hate me?

MAURICE. You have always been a good fellow, Delescluze. (*Studies the spider further.*)

LUCIEN. That's true, you have.

PIERRE. You know how it is, Delescluze. At home in the street there was nothing but drudgery and worry for the morrow and drudgery again and drunkenness, and then came death, the most useless and meanest thing of all. But now it's different. Now life has become something big that it's hard to leave. Then you have something to die for.

GABRIELLE. Yes, that's how it is.

DELESCLUZE. My friends, will you help me now?

PIERRE. No.

DELESCLUZE. Now we must die. I am not a Christian. The

Christians betray the world to go toward their shining hope. But we can go hence calmly, *because we desire that our hope shall remain*. Our hope shall remain! Those people out there can sing off the grass with their grenades, but they can never kill the earth's power to turn green.

LUCIEN. But those who come after us must have better weapons! Next time it must be victory, victory, victory.

DELESCLUZE. Goodness can only triumph by violence, that is the bitter thing we have learned. Our avengers, our children must be a generation of inhuman strength.

GABRIELLE. Delescluze, let me ask something greater of mankind than that it shall be inhuman.

DELESCLUZE. The generations that come after us will have to fight their way through fearful times. Must they be crippled? Yes. Must they be blinded? Yes. Must they die? Yes. Rather than lose the will to become free men.

GABRIELLE. Do you think the generations after us must kill, must die in order to create justice?

DELESCLUZE. The fight is coming. There is a law that is stronger than we.

GABRIELLE. Then we must make mankind stronger than the law. What is there that mind cannot do? It can make the oppressed believe and the oppressors doubt. (*A faint, compelling music of drums begins in the distance where the Versailles troops are.*)

DELESCLUZE. Do you think there is any reason today to believe in a reconciliation, from human mind to human mind?

GABRIELLE. But it's the *irreconcilable* I believe in. Everyone who thinks and works after us—must know that there is only one defense against terror, the refusal of human thought to compromise with injustice.

PIERRE. Yes. I should like to have been in on that.

MAURICE (*passionately interested*). A spider like that is the cleverest . . . That's what I call spinning, that is.

ROSE. And how prettily it shines in the sun!

LUCIEN (*to Pauline*). Now they're beginning to move. Do

you know what I'm glad of—that we haven't any bullets left. If we had shot, they would perhaps have stormed us and taken us with bayonets. Now we can just stay quiet. Aren't you glad of that, Pauline?

PAULINE. Yes, Lucien.

DELESCLUZE (*getting up*). They're coming now. (*The steady, dark beat of the music comes nearer. Deep down sounds the motif from Beethoven's Ninth.*)

ROSE. Now they will kill us. (*Guy wants to tear down the spider's web, but Maurice stops him.*)

MAURICE. Leave it alone!

GUY. Now they will kill us. Now we'll tear the web into pieces.

MAURICE. No. We must let him finish it. (*Gets up, saying to the two others.*) Just stay close to me, you two. (*Impelled by the music they walk step by step over against the wall.*)

DELESCLUZE. At last! No more worry, no more defeats, no more prison. Now I can just stand and look at the sky and remember and hope, protected by death. Nothing more to be done.

LUCIEN. Thank you for now, Pauline.

PAULINE (*taking his hand*). Thank you, Lucien.

GABRIELLE. Delescluze, there is still something we can manage to say.

DELESCLUZE. To whom?

GABRIELLE. To those who kill us. Come, children, we shall tell them of the future, of our uncompromising faith.

MAURICE. How?

GABRIELLE. They shall see it in our smile.

MAURICE. What shall we smile at? (*We feel now that the advancing soldiers have halted.*)

LUCIEN. Now we must just stand quiet and not put on any airs. They'd better hurry up a bit. That's right. That's how it should be. (*The shadow of the guns of the execution squad falls on the wall. A roll of drums. Darkness. At the same moment the Beethoven motif breaks away from the drums and sounds forth in pure and mighty harmony.*)